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1784

v.2



By Henry, Francis, & John, &
C E C I L I A,

O R

M E M O I R S

O F A N

H E I R E S S.

B Y

THE AUTHOR OF EVELINA.

THE FOURTH EDITION.


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v. 2

C E C I L I A.

B O O K III.

C H A P T E R I.

AN ADMONITION.

THE Harrels and Mr. Arnott waited the return of Cecilia with the utmost impatience; she told them with much concern the failure of her embassy, which Mr. Harrel heard with visible resentment and discontent, while Mr. Arnott, entreating him not to think of it, again made an offer of his services, and declared he would disregard all personal inconvenience for the pleasure of making him and his sister easy.

Cecilia was much mortified that she had not the power to act the same part, and asked Mr. Harrel whether he believed his own influence with Mr. Briggs would be more successful.

“No, no,” answered he, “the old curmudgeon would but the rather refuse. I know his reason, and therefore am sure all my pleas will be vain. He has dealings in the alley, and I dare say games with your money as if it were his own. There is, indeed, one way—but I do not think you would like it—though I protest I hardly know why not—however, ’tis as well let alone.”

Cecilia insisted upon hearing what he meant, and, after some hesitation, he hinted that there were means, by which, with very little inconvenience, she might borrow the money.

Cecilia, with that horror natural to all unpractised minds at the first idea of contracting a voluntary debt, started at this suggestion, and seemed very ill disposed to listen to it. Mr. Harrel, perceiving her repugnance, turned to Mr. Arnott, and said, “Well, my good brother, I hardly know how to suffer you to sell out at such a loss, but yet, my present necessity is so urgent——”

“Don’t mention it,” cried Mr. Arnott; “I am very sorry I let you know it; be certain however, that while I have any thing, it is yours and my sister’s.”

The two gentlemen were then retiring together; but Cecilia, shocked for Mr. Arnott, though unmoved by Mr. Harrel, stopt them to enquire what was the way by which

which it was meant she could borrow the money?

Mr. Harrel seemed averse to answer, but she would not be refused; and then he mentioned a Jew, of whose honesty he had made undoubted trial, and who, as she was so near being of age, would accept very trifling interest for whatever she should like to take up.

The heart of Cecilia recoiled at the very mention of a *Jew*, and *taking up money upon interest*; but, impelled strongly by her own generosity to emulate that of Mr. Arnott, she agreed, after some hesitation, to have recourse to this method.

Mr. Harrel then made some faint denials, and Mr. Arnott protested he had a thousand times rather sell out at any discount, than consent to her taking such a measure; but, when her first reluctance was conquered, all that he urged served but to shew his worthiness in a stronger light, and only increased her desire of saving him from such repeated imposition.

Her total ignorance in what manner to transact this business, made her next put it wholly into the hands of Mr. Harrel, whom she begged to take up 600 *l.* upon such terms as he thought equitable, and to which, whatever they might be, she would sign her name.

He seemed somewhat surpris'd at the sum,

but without any question or objection undertook the commission; and Cecilia would not lessen it, because unwilling to do more for the security of the luxurious Mr. Harrel, than for the distresses of the laborious Hills.

Nothing could be more speedy than the execution of this affair, Mr. Harrel was diligent and expert, the whole was settled the morning, and, giving to the Jew her bond for the payment at the interest he required, she put into the hands of Mr. Harrel 350*l.* for which he gave his receipt, and she kept the rest for her own purposes.

She intended the morning after this transaction to settle her account with the book-feller. When she went into the parlour to breakfast, she was somewhat surprised to see Mr. Harrel seated there, in earnest discourse with his wife. Fearful of interrupting a tête à tête so uncommon, she would have retired; but Mr. Harrel, calling after her, said, "O pray come in! I am only telling Priscilla a piece of my usual ill luck. You must know I happen to be in immediate want of 200*l.* though only for three or four days, and I sent to order honest old Aaron to come hither directly with the money; but it so happens that he went out of town the moment he had done with us yesterday, and will not be back again this week. Now I don't believe there is another Jew in the
king-

kingdom who will let me have money upon the same terms: they are such notorious rascals, that I hate the very thought of employing them."

Cecilia, who could not but understand what this meant, was too much displeas'd both by his extravagance and his indelicacy, to feel at all inclined to change the destination of the money she had just received; and therefore coolly agreed that it was unfortunate, but added nothing more.

"O, it is provoking indeed," cried he, "for the extra-interest I must pay one of those extortioners is absolutely so much money thrown away."

Cecilia, still without noticing these hints, began her breakfast. Mr. Harrel then said he would take his tea with them; and, while he was buttering some dry toast, exclaimed, as if from sudden recollection, "O Lord, now I think of it, I believe, Miss Beverley, you can lend me this money yourself for a day or two. The moment old Aaron comes to town, I will pay you."

Cecilia, whose generosity, however extensive, was neither thoughtless nor indiscriminate, found something so repulsive in this gross procedure, that instead of assenting to his request with her usual alacrity, she answered very gravely, that the money she had just received was already appropriated to a

particular purpose, and she knew not how to defer making use of it.

Mr. Harrel was extremely chagrined by this reply, which was by no means what he expected; but, tossing down a dish of tea, he began humming an air, and soon recovered his usual unconcern.

In a few minutes, ringing his bell, he desired a servant to go to Mr. Zackery, and inform him that he wanted to speak with him immediately.

“And now,” said he, with a look in which vexation seemed struggling with carelessness, “the thing is done! I don’t like, indeed, to get into such hands, for ’tis hard ever to get out of them, when once one begins,—and hitherto I have kept pretty clear. But there is no help for it—Mr. Arnott cannot just now assist me—and so the thing must take its course. Priscilla, why do you look so grave?”

“I am thinking how unlucky it is my Brother should happen to be unable to lend you this money.”

“O, don’t think about it; I shall get rid of the man very soon, I dare say; I shall pay him off in a very few days,—I hope so, at least—I am sure I mean it.”

Cecilia now grew a little disturbed; she looked at Mrs. Harrel, who seemed also uneasy, and then, with some hesitation, said

“Have

“Have you really never, Sir, employed this man before?”

“Never in my life: never any but old Aaron. I dread the whole race; I have a sort of superstitious notion that if once I get into their clutches, I shall never be my own man again; and that induced me to beg your assistance. However, 'tis no great matter.”

She then began to waver; she feared there might be future mischief as well as present inconvenience, in his applying to new usurers, and knowing she had now the power to prevent him, thought herself half cruel in refusing to exert it. She wished to consult Mr. Monckton, but found it necessary to take her measures immediately, as the Jew was already sent for, and must in a few moments be either employed or discarded.

Much perplexed how to act, between a desire of doing good, and a fear of encouraging evil, she weighed each side hastily, but while still uncertain which ought to preponderate, her kindness for Mrs. Harrel interfered, and, in the hope of rescuing her husband from further bad practices, she said she would postpone her own business for the few days he mentioned, rather than see him compelled to open any new account with so dangerous a set of men.

He thanked her in his usual negligent manner, and accepting the 200*l.* gave her

his receipt for it, and a promise she should be paid in a week.

Mrs. Harrel, however, seemed more grateful, and with many embraces spoke her sense of this friendly good-nature. Cecilia, happy from believing she had revived in her some spark of sensibility, determin'd to avail herself of so favourable a symptom, and enter at once upon the disagreeable task she had set herself, of representing to her the danger of her present situation.

As soon, therefore, as breakfast was done, and Mr. Arnott, who came in before it was over, was gone, with a view to excite her attention by raising her curiosity, she begged the favour of a private conference in her own room, upon matters of some importance.

She began with hoping that the friendship in which they had so long lived would make her pardon the liberty she was going to take, and which nothing less than their former intimacy, joined to strong apprehensions for her future welfare, could authorise: "But oh Priscilla!" she continued, "with open eyes to see your danger, yet not warn you of it, would be a reserve treacherous in a friend, and cruel even in a fellow-creature."

"What danger?" cried Mrs. Harrel, much alarmed, "do you think me ill? do I look consumptive?"

"Yes,

“ Yes, consumptive indeed !” said Cecilia, “ but not, I hope, in your constitution.”

And then, with all the tenderness in her power, she came to the point, and conjured her without delay to retrench her expences, and change her thoughtless way of life for one more considerate and domestic.

Mrs. Harrel, with much simplicity, assured her *she did nothing but what every body else did*, and that it was quite impossible for her to *appear in the world* in any other manner.

“ But how are you to appear hereafter ?” cried Cecilia, “ if now you live beyond your income, you must consider that, in time, your income by such depredations will be exhausted.”

“ But I declare to you,” answered Mrs. Harrel, “ I never run in debt for more than half a year, for as soon as I receive my own money, I generally pay it away every shilling: and so borrow what I want till pay-day comes round again.”

“ And that,” said Cecilia, “ seems a method expressly devised for keeping you eternally comfortless: pardon me, however, for speaking so openly, but I fear Mr. Harrel himself must be even still less attentive and accurate in his affairs, or he could not so frequently be embarrassed. And what is to be the result? look but, my dear Priscilla, a little forward, and you will tremble at the prospect before you !”

Mrs Harrel seemed frightened at this speech, and begged to know what she would have them do?

Cecilia then, with equal wisdom and friendliness, proposed a general reform in the household, the public and private expenses of both: she advised that a strict examination might be made into the state of their affairs, that all their bills should be called in, and faithfully paid, and that an entire new plan of life should be adopted, according to the situation of their fortune and income when cleared of all incumbrances.

“Lord, my dear!” exclaimed Mrs. Harrel, with a look of astonishment, “why Mr. Harrel would no more do all this than fly! If I was only to make such a proposal, I dare say he would laugh in my face.”

“And why?”

“Why?—why because it would seem such an odd thing—it’s what nobody thinks of—though I am sure I am very much obliged to you for mentioning it.—Shall we go down stairs? I think I heard somebody come in.”

“No matter who comes in,” said Cecilia, “reflect for a moment upon my proposal, and, at least, if you disapprove it, suggest something more eligible.”

“O, it’s a very good proposal, that I agree,” said Mrs. Harrel, looking very
weary,

wearily, "but only the thing is, it's quite impossible."

"Why so? why is it impossible?"

"Why because—dear, I don't know—but I am sure it is."

"But what is your reason? What makes you sure of it?"

"Lord, I can't tell—but I know it is—because—I am very certain it is."

Argument such as this, though extremely fatiguing to the understanding of Cecilia, had yet no power to *blunt her purpose*: she warmly expostulated against the weakness of her defence, strongly represented the imprudence of her conduct, and exhorted her by every tie of justice, honour and discretion to set about a reformation.

"Why what can I do?" cried Mrs. Harrel, impatiently, "one must live a little like other people. You would not have me be stared at, I suppose; and I am sure I don't know what I do that every body else does not do too."

"But were it not better," said Cecilia, with more energy, "to think less of *other people*, and more of *yourself*? to consult your own fortune, and your own situation in life, instead of being blindly guided by those of *other people*? If, indeed, *other people* would be responsible for your losses, for the diminution of your wealth, and for the disorder of your affairs, then might you rationally make
their

their way of life the example of yours: but you cannot flatter yourself such will be the case; you know better; your losses, your diminished fortune, your embarrassed circumstances will be all your own! pitied, perhaps, by some, but blamed by more, and assisted by none!"

"Good Lord, Miss Beverley!" cried Mrs. Harrel, starting, "you talk just as if we were ruined!"

"I mean not that," replied Cecilia, "but I would fain, by pointing out your danger, prevail with you to prevent in time so dreadful a catastrophe."

Mrs. Harrel, more affronted than alarmed, heard this answer with much displeasure, and after a sullen hesitation, peevishly said, "I must own I don't take it very kind of you to say such frightful things to me: I am sure we only live like the rest of the world, and I don't see why a man of Mr. Harrel's fortune should live any worse. As to his having now and then a little debt or two, it is nothing but what every body else has. You only think it so odd, because you a'n't used to it: but you are quite mistaken if you suppose he does not mean to pay, for he told me this morning, that as soon as ever he receives his rents, he intends to discharge every bill he has in the world."

"I am very glad to hear it," answered Cecilia, "and I heartily wish he may have the
the

the resolution to adhere to his purpose. I feared you would think me impertinent, but you do worse in believing me unkind: friendship and good-will could alone have induced me to hazard what I have said to you. I must, however, have done; though I cannot forbear adding that I hope what has already passed will sometimes recur to you."

They then separated; Mrs. Harrel half angry at remonstrances she thought only censorious, and Cecilia offended at her pettishness and folly, though grieved at her blindness.

She was soon, however, recompensed for this vexation by a visit from Mrs. Delvile, who, finding her alone, sat with her some time, and by her spirit, understanding and elegance, dissipated all her chagrin.

From another circumstance, also, she received much pleasure, though a little perplexity; Mr. Arnott brought her word that Mr. Belfield, almost quite well, had actually left his lodgings, and was gone into the country.

She now half suspected that the account of his illness given her by young Delvile, was merely the effect of his curiosity to discover her sentiments of him; yet when she considered how foreign to his character appeared every species of artifice, she exculpated him from the design, and concluded that the impatient spirit of Belfield had hurried

ried him away, when really unfit for travelling. She had no means, however, to hear more of him now he had quitted the town, and therefore, though uneasy, she was compelled to be patient.

In the evening she had again a visit from Mr. Monckton, who, though he was now acquainted how much she was at home, had the forbearance to avoid making frequent use of that knowledge, that his attendance might escape observation.

Cecilia, as usual, spoke to him of all her affairs with the utmost openness; and as her mind was now chiefly occupied by her apprehensions for the Harrels, she communicated to him the extravagance of which they were guilty, and hinted at the distress that from time to time it occasioned; but the assistance she had afforded them her own delicacy prevented her mentioning.

Mr. Monckton scrupled not from this account instantly to pronounce Harrel a *ruined man*; and thinking Cecilia, from her connection with him, in much danger of being involved in his future difficulties, he most earnestly exhorted her to suffer no inducement to prevail with her to advance him any money, confidently affirming she would have little chance of being ever repaid.

Cecilia listened to this charge with much alarm, but readily promised future circumspection. She confessed to him the conference

ference she had had in the morning with Mrs. Harrel, and after lamenting her determined neglect of her affairs, she added, " I cannot but own that my esteem for her, even more than my affection, has lessened almost every day since I have been in her house; but this morning, when I ventured to speak to her with earnestness, I found her powers of reasoning so weak, and her infatuation to luxury and expence so strong, that I have ever since felt ashamed of my own want of discernment, in having formerly selected her for my friend."

" When you gave her that title," said Mr. Monckton, " you had little choice in your power; her sweetness and good nature attracted you; childhood is never troubled with foresight, and youth is seldom difficult: she was lively and pleasing, you were generous and affectionate; your acquaintance with her was formed while you were yet too young to know your own worth; your fondness of her grew from habit; and before the inferiority of her parts had weakened your regard, by offending your judgment, her early marriage separated you from her entirely. But now you meet again the scene is altered; three years of absence spent in the cultivation of an understanding naturally of the first order, by encreasing your wisdom, has made you more fastidious; while the same time spent by her in mere idleness and
shew,

shew, has hurt her disposition, without adding to her knowledge, and robbed her of her natural excellencies, without enriching her with acquired ones. You see her now with impartiality, for you see her almost as a stranger, and all those deficiencies which retirement and inexperience had formerly concealed, her vanity, and her superficial acquaintance with the world, have now rendered glaring. But folly weakens all bands; remember, therefore, if you would form a solid friendship, to consult not only the heart but the head, not only the temper, but the understanding."

"Well, then," said Cecilia, "at least it must be confessed I have judiciously chosen *you!*"

"You have, indeed, done me the highest honour," he answered.

They then talked of Belfield, and Mr. Monckton confirmed the account of Mr. Arnott, that he had left London in good health. After which, he enquired if she had seen any thing more of the Delviles?

"Yes," said Cecilia, "Mrs. Delvile called upon me this morning. She is a delightful woman; I am sorry you know her not enough to do her justice."

"Is she civil to you?"

"Civil? she is all kindness!"

"Then depend upon it she has something in view: whenever that is not the case, she is
all

all insolence. And Mr. Delvile—pray what do you think of him?”

“O, I think him insufferable! and I cannot sufficiently thank you for that timely caution which prevented my change of habitation. I would not live under the same roof with him for the world!”

“Well, and do you not now begin also to see the son properly?”

“Properly? I don’t understand you.”

“Why as the very son of such parents, haughty and impertinent.”

“No, indeed; he has not the smallest resemblance of his father, and if he resembles his mother, it is only what every one must wish who impartially sees her.”

“You know not that family. But how, indeed, should you, when they are in a combination to prevent your getting that knowledge? They have all their designs upon you, and if you are not carefully upon your guard, you will be the dupe to them.”

“What can you possibly mean?”

“Nothing but what every body else must immediately see; they have a great share of pride, and a small one of wealth; you seem by fortune to be flung in their way, and doubtless they mean not to neglect so inviting an opportunity of repairing their estates.”

“Indeed you are mistaken; I am certain they have no such intention: on the contrary, they

they all even teasingly persist in thinking me already engaged elsewhere."

She then gave him a history of their several suspicions. "The impertinence of report," she added, "has so much convinced them that Sir Robert Floyer and Mr. Belfield fought merely as rivals, that I can only clear myself of partiality for one of them, to have it instantly concluded I feel it for the other. And, far from seeming hurt that I appear to be disposed of, Mr. Delvile openly seconds the pretensions of Sir Robert, and his son officiously persuades me that I am already Mr. Belfield's."

"Tricks, nothing but tricks to discover your real situation."

He then gave her some general cautions to be upon her guard against their artifices, and changing the subject, talked, for the rest of his visit, upon matters of general entertainment.

C H A P. II.

A N E V A S I O N.

C E C I L I A now for about a fortnight passed her time without incident: the Harrels continued their accustomed dissipation, Sir Robert Floyer, without even seeking a private conference, persevered in his attentions, and Mr. Arnott, though still silent and humble, seemed only to live by the pleasure of beholding her. She spent two whole days with Mrs. Delvile, both of which served to confirm her admiration of that lady and of her son; and she joined the parties of the Harrels, or stayed quietly at home, according to her spirits and inclinations: while she was visited by Mr. Monckton often enough to satisfy him with her proceedings, yet too seldom to betray either to herself or to the world any suspicion of his designs.

Her 200*l.* however, which was to have been returned at the end of the first week, though a fortnight had now elapsed, had not even been mentioned: she began to grow very impatient, but not knowing what course to pursue, and wanting courage to remind Mr. Harrel of his promise, she still waited the performance of it without speaking. •

At

At this time, preparations were making in the family for removing to Violet Bank to spend the Easter holidays : but Cecilia, who was too much grieved at such perpetual increase of unnecessary expences to have any enjoyment in new prospects of entertainment, had at present some business of her own which gave her full employment.

The poor carpenter, whose family she had taken under her protection, was just dead, and, as soon as the last duties had been paid him, she sent for his widow, and after trying to console her for the loss she had suffered, assured her she was immediately ready to fulfil the engagement into which she had entered, of assisting her to undertake some better method of procuring a livelihood ; and therefore desired to know in what manner she could serve her, and what she thought herself able to do.

The good woman, pouring forth thanks and praises innumerable, answered that she had a Cousin, who had offered, for a certain premium, to take her into partnership in a small haberdasher's shop. " But then, madam," continued she, " it's quite morally impossible I should raise such a sum, or else, to be sure, such a shop as that, now I am grown so poorly, would be quite a heaven upon earth to me : for my strength, madam, is almost all gone away, and when I do any hard work, it's quite a piteous sight to see
me,

me, for I am all in a tremble after it, just as if I had an ague, and yet all the time my hands, madam, will be burning like a coal!"

"You have indeed been overworked," said Cecilia, "and it is high time your feeble frame should have some rest. What is the sum your cousin demands?"

"O madam, more than I should be able to get together in all my life! for earn what I will, it goes as fast as it comes, because there's many mouths, and small pay, and two of the little ones that can't help at all; — and there's no Billy, madam, to work for us now!"

"But tell me, what is the sum?"

"Sixty pound, madam."

"You shall have it!" cried the generous Cecilia, "if the situation will make you happy, I will give it you myself."

The poor woman wept her thanks, and was long before she could sufficiently compose herself to answer the further questions of Cecilia, who next enquired what could be done with the children? Mrs. Hill, however, hitherto hopeless of such a provision for herself, had for them formed no plan. She told her, therefore, to go to her cousin, and consult upon this subject, as well as to make preparations for her own removal.

The arrangement of this business now became her favourite occupation. She went herself to the shop, which was a very small
one

one in Fetter-lane, and spoke with Mrs. Roberts, the cousin; who agreed to take the eldest girl, now sixteen years of age, by way of helper; but said she had room for no other: however, upon Cecilia's offering to raise the premium, she consented that the two little children should also live in the house, where they might be under the care of their mother and sister.

There were still two others to be disposed of; but as no immediate method of providing for them occurred to Cecilia, she determined, for the present, to place them in some cheap School, where they might be taught plain work, which could not but prove a useful qualification for whatever sort of business they might hereafter attempt.

Her plan was to bestow upon Mrs. Hill and her children 100*l.* by way of putting them all into a decent way of living; and then, from time to time, to make them such small presents as their future exigencies or changes of situation might require.

Now, therefore, payment from Mr. Harrel became immediately necessary, for she had only 50*l.* of the 600*l.* she had taken up in her own possession, and her customary allowance was already so appropriated that she could make from it no considerable deduction.

There is nothing in the sight of laborious indigence so affecting and so respectable,

table, that it renders dissipation peculiarly contemptible, and doubles the odium of extravagance; every time Cecilia saw this poor family, her aversion to the conduct and the principles of Mr. Harrel encreased, while her delicacy of shocking or shaming him diminished, and she soon acquired for them what she had failed to acquire for herself, the spirit and resolution to claim her debt.

One morning, therefore, as he was quitting the breakfast-room, she hastily arose, and following, begged to have a moment's discourse with him. They went together to the library, and after some apologies, and much hesitation, she told him she fancied he had forgotten the 200*l.* which she had lent him.

“The 200*l.*” cried he; “O, ay, true! — I protest it had escaped me. Well, but you don't want it immediately?”

“Indeed I do, if you can conveniently spare it.”

“O yes, certainly! — without the least doubt! — Though now I think of it — it's extremely unlucky, but really just at this time — why did not you put me in mind of it before?”

“I hoped you would have remembered it yourself?”

“I could have paid you two days ago extremely well; — however, you shall certainly have it very soon, that you may de-

pend upon, and a day or two can make no great difference to you."

He then wished her good morning, and left her.

Cecilia, very much provoked, regretted that she had ever lent it at all, and determined for the future strictly to follow the advice of Mr. Monckton in trusting him no more.

Two or three days passed on, but still no notice was taken either of the payment or of the debt. She then resolved to renew her application, and be more serious and more urgent with him; but she found, to her utter surprize, this was not in her power, and that though she lived under the same roof with him, she had no opportunity to enforce her claim. Mr. Harrel, whenever she desired to speak with him, protested he was so much hurried he had not a moment to spare: and even when, tired of his excuses, she pursued him out of the room, he only quickened his speed, smiling, however, and bowing, and calling out "I am vastly sorry, but I am so late now I cannot stop an instant; however, as soon as I come back, I shall be wholly at your command."

When he came back, however, Sir Robert Floyer, or some other gentleman, was sure to be with him, and the difficulties of obtaining an audience were sure to be increased. And by this method, which he
constantly

constantly practised, of avoiding any private conversation, he frustrated all her schemes of remonstrating upon his delay, since her resentment, however great, could never urge her to the indelicacy of dunning him in presence of a third person.

She was now much perplexed herself how to put into execution her plan for the Hills: she knew it would be as vain to apply for money to Mr. Briggs, as for payment to Mr. Harrel. Her word, however, had been given, and her word she held sacred: she resolved, therefore, for the present, to bestow upon them the 50*l.* she still retained, and, if the rest should be necessary before she became of age, to spare it, however inconveniently, from her private allowance, which, by the will of her uncle, was 500*l.* a year, 250*l.* of which Mr. Harrel received for her board and accommodations.

Having settled this matter in her own mind, she went to the lodging of Mrs. Hill, in order to conclude the affair. She found her and all her children, except the youngest, hard at work, and their honest industry so much strengthened her compassion, that her wishes for serving them grew every instant more liberal.

Mrs. Hill readily undertook to make her cousin accept half the premium for the present, which would suffice to fix her, with three of her children, in the shop: Cecilia

then went with her to Fetter-lane, and there drawing up herself an agreement for their entering into partnership, she made each of them sign it and take a copy, and kept a third in her own possession: after which, she gave a promissory note to Mrs. Roberts for the rest of the money.

She presented Mrs. Hill, also, with 10*l.* to clothe them all decently, and enable her to send two of the children to school; and assured her that she would herself pay for their board and instruction, till she should be established in her business, and have power to save money for that purpose.

She then put herself into a chair to return home, followed by the prayers and blessings of the whole family.

C H A P. III.

AN ADVENTURE.

NEVER had the heart of Cecilia felt so light, so gay, so glowing, as after the transaction of this affair: her life had never appeared to her so important, nor her wealth so valuable. To see five helpless children provided

provided for by herself, rescued from the extremes of penury and wretchedness, and put in a way to become useful to society, and comfortable to themselves; to behold their feeble mother, snatched from the hardship of that labour which, over-powering her strength, had almost destroyed her existence, now placed in a situation where a competent maintenance might be earned without fatigue, and the remnant of her days pass in easy employment—to view such sights, and have power to say “*These deeds are mine!*” what, to a disposition fraught with tenderness and benevolence, could give purer self-applause, or more exquisite satisfaction?

Such were the pleasures which regaled the reflections of Cecilia, when, in her way home, having got out of her chair to walk through the upper part of Oxford-Street, she was suddenly met by the old gentleman whose emphatical addresses to her had so much excited her astonishment.

He was passing quick on, but stopping the moment he perceived her, he sternly called out, “Are you proud? are you callous? are you hard of heart so soon?”

“Put me, if you please, to some trial!” cried Cecilia, with the virtuous courage of a self-acquitting conscience.

“I already have!” returned he, indignantly, “and already I have found you faulty!”

“ I am sorry to hear it,” said the amazed Cecilia ; “ but at least I hope you will tell me in what ? ”

“ You refused me admittance,” he answered, “ yet I was your friend, yet I was willing to prolong the term of your genuine tranquillity ! I pointed out to you a method of preserving peace with your own soul ; I came to you in behalf of the poor, and instructed you how to merit their prayers ; you heard me, you were susceptible, you complied ! I meant to have repeated the lesson, to have turned your whole heart to compassion, and to have taught you the sad duties of sympathising humanity. For this purpose I called again, but again I was not admitted ! Short was the period of my absence, yet long enough for the completion of your downfall ! ”

“ Good heaven,” cried Cecilia, “ how dreadful is this language ! when have you called, Sir ? I never heard you had been at the house. Far from refusing you admittance, I wished to see you.”

“ Indeed ? ” cried he, with some softness, “ and are you, in truth, not proud ? not callous ? not hard of heart ? Follow me, then, and visit the humble and the poor, follow me, and give comfort to the fallen and dejected ! ”

At this invitation, however desirous to *do good*, Cecilia started ; the strangeness of
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the inviter, his flightiness, his authoritative manner, and the uncertainty whither or to whom he might carry her, made her fearful of proceeding: yet a benevolent curiosity to see as well as serve the objects of his recommendation, joined to the eagerness of youthful integrity to clear her own character from the aspersion of hard-heartedness, soon conquered her irresolution, and, making a sign to her servant to keep near her, she followed as her conductor led.

He went on silently and solemnly till he came to Swallow-street, then turning into it, he stopt at a small and mean-looking house, knocked at the door, and without asking any question of the man who opened it, beckoned her to come after him, and hastened up some narrow winding stairs.

Cecilia again hesitated; but when she recollected that this old man, though little known, was frequently seen, and though with few people acquainted, was by many personally recognized, she thought it impossible he could mean her any injury. She ordered her servant, however, to come in, and bid him keep walking up and down the stairs till she returned to him. And then she obeyed the directions of her guide.

He proceeded till he came to the second floor, then, again beckoning her to follow him, he opened a door, and entered a small and very meanly furnished apartment.

And here, to her infinite astonishment, she perceived, employed in washing some china, a very lovely young woman, genteely dressed, and appearing hardly seventeen years of age.

The moment they came in, with evident marks of confusion, she instantly gave over her work, hastily putting the basin she was washing upon the table, and endeavouring to hide the towel with which she was wiping it, behind her chair.

The old gentleman, advancing to her with quickness, said, "How is he now? is he better? will he live?"

"Heaven forbid he should not!" answered the young woman with emotion, "but, indeed, he is no better!"

"Look here," said he pointing to Cecilia, "I have brought you one who has power to serve you, and to relieve your distress: one who is rolling in affluence, a stranger to ill, a novice in the world;—unskilled in the miseries she is yet to endure, unconscious of the depravity into which she is to sink!—Receive her benefactions while yet she is untainted, satisfied that while she aids you, she is blessing herself!"

The young woman, blushing and abashed, said, "You are very good to me, Sir, but there is no occasion—there is no need—I have not any necessity—I am far from being so very much in want.—"

"Poor simple soul!" interrupted the old man,

man, "and art thou ashamed of poverty? Guard, guard thyself from other shames, and the wealthiest may envy thee! Tell here thy story, plainly, roundly, truly; abate nothing of thy indigence, repress nothing of her liberality. The Poor, not impoverished by their own Guilt, are Equals of the Affluent, not enriched by their own Virtue. Come, then, and let me present ye to each other! young as ye both are, with many years and many sorrows to encounter, lighten the burthen of each other's cares, by the heart-soothing exchange of gratitude for beneficence!"

He then took a hand of each, and joining them between his own, "*You*," he continued, "who though rich, are not hardened, and *you*, who though poor, are not debased, why should ye not love, why should ye not cherish each other? The afflictions of life are tedious, its joys are evanescent; ye are now both young, and with little to enjoy, will find much to suffer. Ye are both, too, I believe, innocent—Oh could ye always remain so!—Cherubs were ye then, and the sons of men might worship you!"

He stopt, checked by his own rising emotion; but soon resuming his usual austerity, "Such, however," he continued, "is not the condition of humanity; in pity, therefore, to the evils impending over both, be kind to each other! I leave you together,

and to your mutual tenderness I recommend you !”

Then, turning particularly to Cecilia, “ Disdain not,” he said, “ to console the depressed; look upon her without scorn, converse with her without contempt: like you, she is an Orphan, though not, like you, an Heiress;—like her you are fatherless, though not like her friendless! If *she* is awailed by the temptations of adversity, *you*, also, are surrounded by the corruptions of prosperity. Your fall is most probable, her’s most excusable;—commiserate *her* therefore now,—by and by she may commiserate *you* ?”

And with these words he left the room.

A total silence for some time succeeded his departure: Cecilia found it difficult to recover from the surprise into which she had been thrown sufficiently for speech; in following her extraordinary director, her imagination had painted to her a scene such as she had so lately quitted, and prepared her to behold some family in distress, some helpless creature in sickness, or some children in want; but of these to see none, to meet but one person, and that one fair, young, and delicate,—an introduction so singular to an object so unthought of, deprived her of all power but that of shewing her amazement.

Mean while the young woman looked scarcely less surprised, and infinitely more embarrassed. She surveyed her apartment
with

with vexation, and her guest with confusion; she had listened to the exhortation of the old man with visible uneasiness, and now he was gone, seemed overwhelmed with shame and chagrin.

Cecilia, who in observing these emotions felt both her curiosity and her compassion encrease, pressed her hand as she parted with it, and, when a little recovered, said, "You must think this a strange intrusion; but the gentleman who brought me hither is perhaps so well known to you, as to make his singularities plead with you their own apology."

"No, indeed, madam," she answered bashfully, "he is very little known to me; but he is very good, and very desirous to do me service:—not but what I believe he thinks me much worse off than I really am, for, I assure you, madam, whatever he has said, I am not ill off at all—hardly."

The various doubts to her disadvantage which had at first, from her uncommon situation, arisen in the mind of Cecilia, this anxiety to disguise, not display her distress, considerably, removed, since it cleared her of all suspicion of seeking by artifice and imposition to play upon her feelings.

With a gentleness, therefore, the most soothing, she replied, "I should by no means have broken in upon you thus unexpectedly, if I had not concluded my conductor had some right to bring me. However, since we

are actually met, let us remember his injunctions, and endeavour not to part, till, by a mutual exchange of good-will, each has added a friend to the other."

"You are condescending indeed, madam," answered the young woman, with an air the most humble, "looking as you look, to talk of a friend when you come to such a place as this! up two pair of stairs! no furniture! no servant! every thing in such disorder!—indeed I wonder at Mr. Albany! he should not——but he thinks every body's affairs may be made public, and does not care what he tells, nor who hears him;—he knows not the pain he gives, nor the mischief he may do."

"I am very much concerned," cried Cecilia, more and more surpris'd at all she heard, "to find I have been thus instrumental to distressing you. I was ignorant whither I was coming, and followed him, believe me, neither from curiosity nor inclination, but simply because I knew not how to refuse him. He is gone, however, and I will therefore relieve you by going too: but permit me to leave behind me a small testimony that the intention of my coming was not mere importuness."

She then took out her purse; but the young woman, starting back with a look of resentful mortification, exclaimed, "No, madam! you are quite mistaken; pray put up
up

up your purse; I am no beggar! Mr. Albany has misrepresented me, if he has told you I am."

Cecilia, mortified in her turn at this unexpected rejection of an offer she had thought herself invited to make, stood some moments silent; and then said, "I am far from meaning to offend you, and I sincerely beg your pardon if I have misunderstood the charge just now given to me."

"I have nothing to pardon, madam," said she more calmly, "except, indeed, to Mr. Albany; and to him, 'tis of no use to be angry, for he minds not what I say; he is very good, but he is very strange, for he thinks the whole world made to live in common, and that every one who is poor should ask, and every one who is rich should give: he does not know that there are many who would rather starve."

"And are you," said Cecilia, half-smiling, "of that number?"

"No, indeed, madam! I have not so much greatness of mind. But those to whom I belong have more fortitude and higher spirit. I wish I could imitate them!"

Struck with the candour and simplicity of this speech, Cecilia now felt a warm desire to serve her, and taking her hand, said, "Forgive me; but though I see you with me gone, I know not how to leave you: recollect, therefore, the charge that has been

given

given to us both, and if you refuse my assistance one way, point out to me in what other I may offer it."

"You are very kind, madam," she answered, "and I dare say you are very good; I am sure you look so at least. But I want nothing; I do very well, and I have hopes of doing better. Mr. Albany is too impatient. He knows, indeed, that I am not extremely rich, but he is much to blame if he supposes me therefore an object of charity, and thinks me so mean as to receive money from a stranger."

"I am truly sorry," cried Cecilia, "for the error I have committed, but you must suffer me to make my peace with you before we part; yet, till I am better known to you, I am fearful of proposing terms. Perhaps you will permit me to leave you my direction, and do me the favour to call upon me yourself?"

"O no, madam! I have a sick relation whom I cannot leave: and indeed, if he were well, he would not like to have me make an acquaintance while I am in this place."

"I hope you are not his only nurse? I am sure you do not look able to bear such fatigue. Has he a physician? Is he properly attended?"

"No, madam; he has no physician, and no attendance at all!"

"And

“ And is it possible that in such a situation you can refuse to be assisted? Surely you should accept some help for him, if not for yourself.”

“ But what will that signify, when, if I do, he will not make use of it? and when he had a thousand and a thousand times rather die, than let any one know he is in want?”

“ Take it, then, unknown to him; serve him without acquainting him you serve him. Surely you would not suffer him to perish without aid?”

“ Heaven forbid! But what can I do? I am under his command, madam, not he under mine?”

“ Is he your father?—Pardon my question, but your youth seems much to want such a protector.”

“ No, madam, I have no father! I was happier when I had! He is my brother.”

“ And what is his illness?”

“ A fever.”

“ A fever, and without a physician! Are you sure, too, it is not infectious?”

“ O yes, too sure!”

“ Too sure? how so?”

“ Because I know too well the occasion of it!”

“ And what is the occasion?” cried Cecilia, again taking her hand, “ pray trust me; indeed you shall not repent your confidence.”

dence. Your reserve hitherto has only raised you in my esteem, but do not carry it so far as to mortify me by a total rejection of my good offices."

"Ah madam!" said the young woman, sighing, "you ought to be good, I am sure, for you will draw all out of me by such kindness as this! the occasion was a neglected wound, never properly healed."

"A wound? is he in the army?"

"No,—he was shot through the side in a duel."

"In a duel?" exclaimed Cecilia, "pray what is his name?"

"O that I must not tell you! his name is a great secret now, while he is in this poor place, for I know he had almost rather never see the light again than have it known."

"Surely, surely," cried Cecilia, with much emotion, "he cannot—I hope he cannot be Mr. Belfield?"

"Ah Heaven!" cried the young woman, screaming, "do you know him?"

Here, in mutual astonishment, they looked at each other.

"You are then," said Cecilia, "the sister of Mr. Belfield? and Mr. Belfield, is thus sick, his wound is not yet healed,—and he is without help!"

"And who, madam, are *you*?" cried she, "and how is it you know him?"

"My name is Beverley."

"Ah!"

“ Ah !” exclaimed she again, “ I fear I have done nothing but mischief! I know very well who you are now, madam; but if my brother discovers that I have betrayed him, he will take it very unkind, and perhaps never forgive me.”

“ Be not alarmed,” cried Cecilia; “ rest assured he shall never know it. Is he not now in the country ? ”

“ No, madam, he is now in the very next room.”

“ But what is become of the surgeon who used to attend him, and why does he not still visit him ? ”

“ It is in vain, now, to hide any thing from you; my brother deceived him, and said he was going out of town merely to get rid of him.”

“ And what could induce him to act so strangely ? ”

“ A reason which you, madam, I hope, will never know, Poverty ! — he would not run up a bill he could not pay.”

“ Good Heaven ! — but what can be done for him? he must not be suffered to linger thus; we must contrive some method of relieving and assisting him, whether he will consent or not.”

“ I fear that will not be possible. One of his friends has already found him out, and has written him the kindest letter! but he would

would not answer it, and would not see him, and was only fretted and angry."

"Well," said Cecilia, "I will not keep you longer, lest he should be alarmed by your absence. To-morrow morning, with your leave, I will call upon you again, and then I hope you will permit me to make some effort to assist you."

"If it only depended upon me, madam," she answered, "now I have the honour to know who you are, I believe I should not make much scruple; for I was not brought up to notions so high as my brother. Ah! happy had it been for him, for me, for all his family, if he had not had them neither!"

Cecilia then repeated her expressions of comfort and kindness, and took her leave.

This little adventure gave her infinite concern; all the horror which the duel had originally occasioned her, again returned; she accused herself with much bitterness for having brought it on; and finding that Mr. Belfield was so cruelly a sufferer both in his health and his affairs, she thought it incumbent upon her to relieve him to the utmost of her ability.

His sister, too, had extremely interested her; her youth, and the uncommon artlessness of her conversation, added to her melancholy situation, and the loveliness of her person, excited in her a desire to serve, and an

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an inclination to love her; and she determined, if she found her as deserving as she seemed engaging, not only to assist her at present, but, if her distresses continued, to receive her into her own house in future.

Again she regretted the undue detention of her 200*l.* What she now had to spare was extremely inadequate to what she now wished to bestow, and she looked forward to the conclusion of her minority with encreasing eagerness. The generous and elegant plan of life she then intended to pursue, daily gained ground in her imagination, and credit in her opinion.

C H A P. IV.

A MAN OF GENIUS.

THE next morning, as soon as breakfast was over, Cecilia went in a chair to Swallow-street; she enquired for Miss Belfield, and was told to go up stairs: but what was her amazement to meet, just coming out of the room into which she was entering, young Delvile!

They both started, and Cecilia, from the seeming strangeness of her situation, felt a
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confusion with which she had hitherto been unacquainted. But Delvile, presently recovering from his surprise, said to her, with an expressive smile, "How good is Miss Beverley thus to visit the sick! and how much better might I have had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Belfield, had I but, by prescience, known her design, and deferred my own enquiries till he had been revived by her's!"

And then bowing, and wishing her good morning, he glided past her.

Cecilia, notwithstanding the openness and purity of her intentions, was so much disconcerted by this unexpected meeting, and pointed speech, that she had not the presence of mind to call him back and clear herself; and the various interrogatories and raileries which had already passed between them upon the subject of Mr. Belfield, made her suppose that what he had formerly suspected he would now think confirmed, and conclude that all her assertions of indifference, proceeded merely from that readiness at hypocrisy upon particular subjects, of which he had openly accused her whole Sex.

This circumstance and this apprehension took from her for a while all interest in the errand upon which she came; but the benevolence of her heart soon brought it back, when, upon going into the room, she saw her new favourite in tears.

"What is the matter!" cried she, tenderly;

derly; "no new affliction I hope has happened? Your brother is not worse?"

"No, madam, he is much the same; I was not crying for him."

"For what then? tell me, acquaint me with your sorrows, and assure yourself you tell them to a friend."

"I was crying, madam, to find so much goodness in the world, when I thought there was so little! to find I have some chance of being again happy, when I thought I was miserable for ever! Two whole years have I spent in nothing but unhappiness, and I thought there was nothing else to be had; but yesterday, madam, brought me *you*, with every promise of nobleness and protection; and to-day a friend of my brother's has behaved so generously, that even my brother has listened to him, and almost consented to be obliged to him!"

"And have you already known so much sorrow," said Cecilia, "that this little dawn of prosperity should wholly overpower your spirits? Gentle, amiable girl! may the future recompense you for the past, and may Mr. Albany's kind wishes be fulfilled in the reciprocation of our comfort and affliction."

They then entered into a conversation which the sweetness of Cecilia, and the gratitude of Miss Belfield, soon rendered interesting, friendly and unreserved: and in a very short time, whatever was essential in the
story

story or situation of the latter was fully communicated. She gave, however, a charge the most earnest, that her brother should never be acquainted with the confidence she had made.

Her father, who had been dead only two years, was a linen-draper in the city; he had six daughters, of whom herself was the youngest, and only one son. This son, Mr. Belfield, was alike the darling of his father, mother, and sisters: he was brought up at Eaton, no expence was spared in his education, nothing was denied that could make him happy. With an excellent understanding he had uncommon quickness of parts, and his progress in his studies were rapid and honourable: his father, though he always meant him for his successor in his business, heard of his improvements with rapture, often saying, "My boy will be the ornament of the city, he will be the best scholar in any shop in London."

He was soon, however, taught another lesson; when, at the age of sixteen, he returned home, and was placed in the shop, instead of applying his talents as his father had expected, to trade, he both despised and abhorred the name of it; when serious, treating it with contempt, when gay, with derision.

He was seized, also, with a most ardent desire to finish his education, like those of

his school-fellows who left Eaton at the same time at one of the Universities; and, after many difficulties, this petition, at the intercession of his mother, was granted, old Mr. Belfield telling him he hoped a little more learning would give him a little more sense; and that when he became a *finished student*, he would not only know the true value of business, but understand how to get money, and make a bargain, better than any man whatsoever within Temple-Bar.

These expectations, equally short-sighted, were also equally fallacious with the former: the son again returned, and returned, as his father had hoped, a *finished student*; but, far from being more tractable, or better disposed for application to trade, his aversion to it now was more stubborn, and his opposition more hardy than ever. The young men of fashion with whom he had formed friendships at school, or at the university, and with whom, from the indulgence of his father, he was always able to vie in expence, and from the indulgence of Nature to excel in capacity, earnestly sought the continuance of his acquaintance, and courted and coveted the pleasure of his conversation: but though he was now totally disqualified for any other society, he lost all delight in their favour from the fear they should discover his abode, and sedulously endeavoured to avoid even occasionally meeting them, lest any of his

his family should at the same time approach him: for of his family, though wealthy, worthy, and independent, he was now so utterly ashamed, that the mortification the most cruel he could receive, was to be asked his address, or told he should be visited.

Tired, at length, of evading the enquiries made by some, and forcing faint laughs at the detection made by others, he privately took a lodging at the west end of the town, to which he thenceforward directed all his friends, and where, under various pretences, he contrived to spend the greatest part of his time.

In all his expensive deceits and frolics, his mother was his never-failing confident and assistant; for when she heard that the companions of her son were men of fashion, some born to titles, others destined to high stations, she concluded he was in the certain road to honour and profit, and frequently distressed herself, without ever repining, in order to enable him to preserve upon equal terms, connections which she believed so conducive to his future grandeur.

In this wild and unsettled manner he passed some time, struggling incessantly against the authority of his father, privately abetted by his mother, and constantly aided and admired by his sisters: till, sick of so desultory a way of life, he entered himself a volunteer in the army.

How

How soon he grew tired of this change has already been related *, as well as his reconciliation with his father, and his becoming a student at the Temple: for the father now grew as weary of opposing, as the young man of being opposed.

Here, for two or three years, he lived in happiness uninterrupted: he extended his acquaintance among the great, by whom he was no sooner known than carested and admired, and he frequently visited his family, which, though he blushed to own in public, he affectionately loved in private. His profession, indeed, was but little in his thoughts, successive engagements occupying almost all his hours. Delighted with the favour of the world, and charmed to find his presence seemed the signal for entertainment, he soon forgot the uncertainty of his fortune, and the inferiority of his rank: the law grew more and more fatiguing, pleasure became more and more alluring, and, by degrees, he had not a day unappropriated to some party or amusement: voluntarily consigning the few leisure moments his gay circle afforded him, to the indulgence of his fancy in some hasty compositions in verse, which were handed about in manuscript, and which contributed to keep him in fashion.

* See p. 16, 17. Vol. I.

Such was his situation at the death of his father; a new scene was then opened to him, and for some time he hesitated what course to pursue.

Old Mr. Belfield, though he lived in great affluence, left not behind him any considerable fortune, after the portions of his daughters, to each of whom he bequeathed 2000*l.* had been deducted from it. But his stock in trade was great, and his business was prosperous and lucrative.

His son, however, did not merely want application and fortitude to become his successor, but skill and knowledge; his deliberation, therefore, was hasty, and his resolution improvident; he determined to continue at the Temple himself, while the shop, which he could by no means afford to relinquish, should be kept up by another name, and the business of it be transacted by an agent; hoping thus to secure and enjoy its emoluments, without either the trouble or the humiliation of attendance.

But this scheme, like most others that have their basis in vanity, ended in nothing but mortification and disappointment: the shop which under old Mr. Belfield had been flourishing and successful, and enriched himself and all his family, could now scarce support the expences of an individual. Without a master, without that diligent attention to its prosperity which the interest of possession alone

alone can give, and the authority of a principal alone can enforce, it quickly lost its fame for the excellence of its goods, and soon after its customers from the report of its declension. The produce, therefore, diminished every month; he was surprised, he was provoked; he was convinced he was cheated, and that his affairs were neglected; but though he threatened from time to time to enquire into the real state of the business, and investigate the cause of its decay, he felt himself inadequate to the task; and now first lamented that early contempt of trade, which by preventing his acquiring some knowledge of it while he had youth and opportunity, made him now ignorant what redress to seek; though certain of imposition and injury.

But yet, however disturbed by alarming suggestions in his hours of retirement, no alteration was made in the general course of his life; he was still the darling of his friends, and the leader in all parties, and still, though his income was lessened, his expences encreased.

Such were his circumstances at the time Cecilia first saw him at the house of Mr. Monckton: from which, two days after her arrival in town, he was himself summoned, by an information that his agent had suddenly left the kingdom.

The fatal consequence of this fraudulent elopement was immediate bankruptcy.

His spirits, however, did not yet fail him ; as he had never been the nominal master of the shop, he escaped all dishonour from its ruin, and was satisfied to consign what remained to the mercy of the creditors, so that his own name should not appear in the Gazette.

Three of his sisters were already extremely well married to reputable tradesmen ; the two elder of those who were yet single were settled with two of those who were married, and Henrietta, the youngest, resided with her mother, who had a comfortable annuity and a small house at Paddington.

Bereft thus through vanity and imprudence of all the long labours of his father, he was now compelled to think seriously of some actual method of maintenance ; since his mother, though willing to sacrifice to him even the nourishment which sustained her, could do for him but little, and that little he had too much justice to accept. The law, even to the most diligent and successful, is extremely slow of profit, and whatever, from his connections and abilities might be hoped hereafter, at present required an expence which he was no longer able to support.

It remained then to try his influence with his friends among the great and the powerful.

His canvass proved extremely honourable ;
every

every one promised something, and all seemed delighted to have an opportunity of serving him.

Pleased with finding the world so much better than report had made it, he now saw the conclusion of his difficulties in the prospect of a place at court.

Belfield, with half the penetration with which he was gifted, would have seen in any other man the delusive idleness of expectations no better founded; but though discernment teaches us the folly of others, experience singly can teach us our own! he flattered himself that his friends had been more wisely selected than the friends of those who in similar circumstances had been beguiled; and he suspected not the fraud of his vanity, till he found his invitations daily slacken, and that his time was at his own command.

All his hopes now rested upon one friend and patron, Mr. Floyer, and uncle of Sir Robert Floyer, a man of power in the royal household, with whom he had lived in great intimacy, and who at this period had the disposal of a place which he solicited. The only obstacle that seemed in his way was from Sir Robert himself, who warmly exerted his interest in favour of a friend of his own. Mr. Floyer, however, assured Belfield of the preference, and only begged his patience till

he could find some opportunity of appeasing his nephew.

And this was the state of his affairs at the time of his quarrel at the Opera-house. Already declared opponents of each other, Sir Robert felt double wrath that for *him* Cecilia should reject his civilities; while Belfield, suspecting he presumed upon his known dependence on his uncle to affront him, felt also double indignation at the haughtiness of his behaviour. And thus, slight as seemed to the world the cause of their contest, each had private motives of animosity that served to stimulate revenge.

The very day after this duel, Mr. Floyer wrote him word that he was now obliged in common decency to take the part of his nephew, and therefore had already given the place to the friend he had recommended.

This was the termination of his hopes, and the signal of his ruin! To the pain of his wound he became insensible, from the superior pain of this unexpected miscarriage; yet his pride still enabled him to disguise his distress, and to see all the friends whom this accident induced to seek him, while from the sprightliness he forced in order to conceal his anguish, he appeared to them more lively and more entertaining than ever.

But these efforts, when left to himself and to nature, only sunk him the deeper in *fatness*; he found an immediate change in his
way

way of life was necessary, yet could not brook to make it in sight of those with whom he had so long lived in all the brilliancy of equality. A high principle of honour which still, in the midst of his gay career, had remained uncorrupted, had scrupulously guarded him from running in debt, and therefore, though of little possessed, that little was strictly his own. He now published that he was going out of town for the benefit of purer air, discharged his surgeon, took a gay leave of his friends, and trusting no one with his secret but his servant, was privately conveyed to mean and cheap lodgings in Swallow-street.

Here, shut up from every human being he had formerly known, he purposed to remain till he grew better, and then again to seek his fortune in the army.

His present situation, however, was little calculated to contribute to his recovery; the dismissal of the surgeon, the precipitation of his removal, the inconveniencies of his lodgings, and the unseasonable deprivation of long customary indulgencies, were unavoidable delays of his amendment; while the mortification of his present disgrace, and the bitterness of his late disappointment, preyed incessantly upon his mind, robbed him of rest, heightened his fever, and reduced him by degrees to a state so low and dangerous, that his servant, alarmed for his

life, secretly acquainted his mother with his illness and retreat.

The mother, almost distracted by this intelligence, instantly, with her daughter, flew to his lodgings. She wished to have taken him immediately to her house at Paddington, but he had suffered so much from his first removal, that he would not consent to another. She would then have called in a physician, but he refused even to see one; and she had too long given way to all his desires and opinions, to have now the force of mind for exerting the requisite authority of issuing her orders without consulting him.

She begged, she pleaded, indeed, and Henrietta joined in her entreaties; but sickness and vexation had not rendered him tame, though they had made him sullen: he resisted their prayers, and commonly silenced them by assurances that their opposition to the plan he had determined to pursue, only inflamed his fever, and retarded his recovery.

The motive of an obduracy so cruel to his friends was the fear of a detection which he thought not merely prejudicial to his affairs, but dishonourable to his character: for, without betraying any symptom of his distress, he had taken a general leave of his acquaintance, upon pretence of going out of town, and he could ill endure to make a discovery which would at once proclaim his *degradation* and his deceit.

Mr.

Mr. Albany had accidentally broken in upon him, by mistaking his room for that of another sick person in the same house, to whom his visit had been intended; but as he knew and revered that old gentleman, he did not much repine at his intrusion.

He was not so easy when the same discovery was made by young Delvile, who chancing to meet his servant in the street, enquired concerning his master's health, and surprizing from him its real state, followed him home; where, soon certain of the change in his affairs by the change of his habitation, he wrote him a letter, in which, after apologizing for his freedom, he warmly declared that nothing could make him so happy as being favoured with his commands, if, either through himself or his friends, he could be so fortunate as to do him any service.

Belfield deeply mortified at this detection of his situation, returned only a verbal answer of cold thanks, and desired he would not speak of his being in town, as he was not well enough to be seen.

This reply gave almost equal mortification to young Delvile, who continued, however, to call at the door with enquiries how he went on, though he made no further attempt to see him.

Belfield, softened at length by the kindness of this conduct, determined to admit him; and he was just come from paying his

first visit, when he was met by Cecilia upon the stairs.

His stay with him had been short, and he had taken no notice either of his change of abode, or his pretence of going into the country; he had talked to him only in general terms and upon general subjects, till he arose to depart, and then he re-urged his offers of service with so much openness and warmth, that Belfield, affected by his earnestness, promised he would soon see him again, and intimated to his delighted mother and sister, that he would frankly consult with him upon his affairs.

Such was the tale which, with various injuncter circumstances, Miss Belfield communicated to Cecilia. "My mother," she added, "who never quits him, knows that you are here, madam, for she heard me talking with somebody yesterday, and she made me tell her all that had passed, and that you said you would come again this morning."

Cecilia returned many acknowledgments for this artless and unreserved communication, but could not, when it was over, forbear enquiring by what early misery she had already, though so very young, spent *two years in nothing but unhappiness?*

"Because," she answered, "when my poor father died all our family separated, and I left every body to go and live with my mother at Paddington; and I was never a favourite
with

with my mother, — no more, indeed, was any body but my brother, for she thinks all the rest of the world only made for his sake. So she used to deny both herself and me almost common necessaries, in order to save up money to make him presents: though, if he had known how it was done, he would only have been angry instead of taking them. However, I should have regarded nothing that had but been for his benefit, for I loved him a great deal more than my own convenience; but sums that would distress us for months to save up, would by him be spent in a day, and then thought of no more! Nor was that all—O no! I had much greater uneasiness to suffer; for I was informed by one of my brother's-in-law how ill every thing went, and that certain ruin would come to my poor brother from the treachery of his agent; and the thought of this was always preying upon my mind, for I did not dare tell it my mother, for fear it should put her out of humour, for, sometimes, she is not very patient; and it mattered little what any of us said to my brother, for he was too gay and too confident to believe his danger."

"Well, but," said Cecilia, "I hope, now, all will go better; if your brother will consent to see a physician——"

"Ah, madam! that is the thing I fear he never will do, because of being seen in these bad lodgings. I would kneel whole days to

prevail with him, but he is unused to controul, and knows not how to submit to it; and he has lived so long among the great, that he forgets he was not born as high as themselves. Oh that he had never quitted his own family! If he had not been spoilt by ambition, he had the best heart and sweetest disposition in the world. But living always with his superiors, taught him to disdain his own relations, and be ashamed of us all; and yet now, in the hour of his distress — who else comes to help him?”

Cecilia then enquired if she wanted not assistance for herself and her mother, observing that they did not seem to have all the conveniencies to which they were entitled.

“Why indeed, madam,” she replied, with an ingenuous smile, “when you first came here I was a little like my brother, for I was sadly ashamed to let you see how ill we lived! but now you know the worst, so I shall fret about it no more.”

“But this cannot be your usual way of life; I fear the misfortunes of Mr. Belfield have spread a ruin wider than his own.”

“No indeed; he took care from the first not to involve us in his hazards, for he is very generous, madam, and very noble in all his notions, and could behave to us all no better about money matters than he has ever done. But from the moment we came to this dismal place, and saw his distress, and
that

that *he* was sunk so low who used always to be higher than any of us, we had a sad scene indeed! My poor mother, whose whole delight was to think that he lived like a nobleman, and who always flattered herself that he would rise to be as great as the company he kept, was so distracted with her disappointment, that she would not listen to reason, but immediately discharged both our servants, said she and I should do all the work ourselves, hired this poor room for us to live in, and sent to order a bill to be put upon her house at Paddington, for she said she would never return to it any more."

"But are you then," cried Cecilia, "without any servant?"

"We have my brother's man, madam, and so he lights our fires, and takes away some of our litters; and there is not much else to be done, except sweeping the rooms, for we eat nothing but cold meat from the cook shops."

"And how long is this to last?"

"Indeed I cannot tell; for the real truth is, my poor mother has almost lost her senses; and ever since our coming here, she has been so miserable and so complaining, that indeed, between her and my brother, I have almost lost mine too! For when she found all her hopes at an end, and that her darling son, instead of being rich and powerful, and surrounded by friends and admirers,

mirers, all trying who should do the most for him, was shut up by himself in this poor little lodging, and instead of gaining more, had spent all he was worth at first, with not a creature to come near him, though ill, though confined, though keeping his bed!— Oh madam, had you seen my poor mother when she first cast her eyes upon him in that condition!—indeed you could never have forgotten it!”

“ I wonder not at her disappointment,” cried Cecilia; “ with expectations so sanguine, and a son of so much merit, it might well indeed be bitter.”

“ Yes, and besides the disappointment, she is now continually reproaching herself for always complying with his humours, and assisting him to appear better than the rest of his family, though my father never approved her doing so. But she thought herself so sure of his rising, that she believed we should all thank her for it in the end. And she always used to say that he was born to be a gentleman, and what a grievous thing it would be to have him made a tradesman.”

“ I hope, at least, she has not the additional misery of seeing him ungrateful for her fondness, however injudicious it may have been?”

“ O no! he does nothing but comfort and cheer her! and indeed it is very good of him, for he has owned to me in private,
that

that but for her encouragement, he could not have run the course he has run, for he should have been obliged to enter into business, whether he had liked it or not. But my poor mother knows this, though he will not tell it her, and therefore she says that unless he gets well she will punish herself all the rest of her life, and never go back to her house, and never hire another servant, and never eat any thing but bread, nor drink any thing but water!"

"Poor unhappy woman!" cried Cecilia, "how dearly does she pay for her imprudent and short-sighted indulgence! but surely you are not also to suffer in the same manner?"

"No, madam, not by her fault, for she wants me to go and live with one of my sisters: but I would not quit her for the world; I should think myself wicked indeed to leave her now. Besides, I don't at all repine at the little hardships I go through at present, because my poor brother is in so much distress, that all we save may be really turned to account; but when we lived so hardly only to procure him luxuries he had no right to, I must own I used often to think it unfair, and if I had not loved him dearly, I should not have borne it so well, perhaps, as I ought."

Cecilia now began to think it high time to release her new acquaintance by quitting her, though she felt herself so much interested in
her

her affairs, that every word she spoke gave her a desire to lengthen the conversation. She ardently wished to make her some present, but was restrained by the fear of offending, or of being again refused; she had, however, devised a private scheme for serving her more effectually than by the donation of a few guineas, and therefore, after earnestly begging to hear from her if she could possibly be of any use, she told her that she should not find her confidence misplaced, and promising again to see her soon, reluctantly departed.

C H A P. V.

AN EXPEDIENT.

THE scheme now projected by Cecilia, was to acquaint the surgeon who had already attended Mr. Belfield with his present situation and address, and to desire him to continue his visits, for the payment of which she would herself be accountable.

The raillery of young Delvile, however, had taught her to fear the constructions of the world, and she therefore purposed to keep both the surgeon and Mr. Belfield ignorant

norant to whom they were indebted. She was aware, indeed, that whatever might be her management, that high-spirited and unfortunate young man would be extremely hurt to find himself thus detected and pursued; but she thought his life too well worth preserving to let it be sacrificed to his pride, and her internal conviction of being herself the immediate cause of its present danger, gave her an anxious and restless desire to be herself the means of extricating him from it.

Rupil, the name of the surgeon, she had already heard mentioned by Mr. Arnott, and in getting into her chair, she ordered Ralph, her man, to enquire where he lived.

“ I know already where he lives, madam,” answered Ralph, “ for I saw his name over a door in Cavendish-street, Oxford-road; I took particular notice of it, because it was at the house where you stood up that day on account of the mob that was waiting to see the malefactors go to Tyburn.”

This answer unravelled to Cecilia a mystery which had long perplexed her; for the speeches of young Delvile when he had surprised her in that situation were now fully explained. In seeing her come out of the surgeon's house, he had naturally concluded she had only entered it to ask news of his patient, Mr. Belfield; her protestations of merely standing up to avoid the crowd, he had only laughed at; and

and his hints at her reserve and dissimulation, were meant but to reproach her for refusing his offer of procuring her intelligence, at the very time when, to all appearance, she anxiously, though clandestinely, sought it for herself.

This discovery, notwithstanding it relieved her from all suspense of his meaning, gave her much vexation: to be supposed to take an interest so ardent, yet so private, in the affairs of Mr. Belfield, might well authorise all suspicions of her partiality for him: and even if any doubt had yet remained, the unlucky meeting upon the stairs at his lodgings, would not fail to dispel it, and confirm the notion of her secret regard. She hoped, however, to have soon some opportunity of clearing up the mistake, and resolved in the mean time to be studiously cautious in avoiding all appearances that might strengthen it.

No caution, however, and no apprehension, could intimidate her active humanity from putting into immediate execution a plan in which she feared any delay might be fatal; and therefore the moment she got home, she wrote the following note to the surgeon.

“ To — RUPIL, Esq.

March 27, 1779.

A FRIEND of Mr. Belfield begs Mr. Rupil will immediately call upon that gentleman, who is in lodgings about the middle of Swallow

low.

low-street, and insist upon visiting him till he is perfectly recovered. Mr. Rupil is entreated not to make known this request, nor to receive from Mr. Belfield any return for his attendance; but to attribute the discovery of his residence to accident, and to rest assured he shall be amply recompensed for his time and trouble by the friend who makes this application, and who is willing to give any security that Mr. Rupil shall think proper to mention, for the performance of this engagement."

Her next difficulty was in what manner to have this note conveyed; to send her own servant was evidently betraying herself, to employ any other was risking a confidence that might be still more dangerous, and she could not trust to the penny-post, as her proposal required an answer. After much deliberation, she at length determined to have recourse to Mrs. Hill, to whose services she was entitled, and upon whose fidelity she could rely.

The morning was already far advanced, but the Harrels dined late, and she would not lose a day where even an hour might be of importance. She went therefore immediately to Mrs. Hill, whom she found already removed into her new habitation in Fetter-lane, and equally busy and happy in the change of scene and of employment.

She

She gave to her a note, which she desired her to carry to Cavendish-street directly, and either to deliver it into Mr. Rupil's own hands, or to bring it back if he was out; but upon no consideration to make known whence or from whom it came.

She then went into the back part of the shop, which by Mrs. Roberts was called the parlour, and amused herself during the absence of her messenger, by playing with the children.

Mrs. Hill at her return said she had found Mr. Rupil at home, and as she refused to give the letter to the servant, she had been taken into a room where he was talking with a gentleman, to whom, as soon as he had read it, he said with a laugh, "Why here's another person with the same proposal as your's! however, I shall treat you both alike." And then he wrote an answer, which he sealed up, and bid her take care of. This answer was as follows:

"Mr. Rupil will certainly attend Mr. Belfield, whose friends may be satisfied he will do all in his power to recover him, without receiving any recompence but the pleasure of serving a gentleman who is so much beloved."

Cecilia, charmed at this unhoped for success, was making further enquiries into what
had

had passed, when Mrs. Hill, in a low voice, said, "There's the gentleman, madam, who was with Mr. Rupil when I gave him the letter. I had a notion he was dodging me all the way I came, for I saw him just behind me, turn which way I would."

Cecilia then looked — and perceived young Delvile! who, after stopping a moment at the door, came into the shop, and desired to be shewn some gloves, which, among other things, were laid in the window.

Extremely disconcerted at the sight of him, she began now almost to fancy there was some fatality attending her acquaintance with him, since she was always sure of meeting, when she had any reason to wish avoiding him.

As soon as he saw he was observed by her, he bowed with the utmost respect: she coloured in returning the salutation, and prepared, with no little vexation, for another attack, and further raillery, similar to what she had already received from him: but, as soon as he had made his purchase, he bowed to her again, and, without speaking, left the shop.

A silence so unexpected at once astonished and disturbed her; she again desired to hear all that had passed at Mr. Rupil's, and from the relation gathered that Delvile had himself undertaken to be responsible for his attendance upon Mr. Belfield.

A liberality

A liberality so like her own failed not to impress her with the most lively esteem: but this served rather to augment than lessen the pain with which she considered the clandestine appearance she thus repeatedly made to him. She had no doubt he had immediately concluded she was author of the application to the surgeon, and that he followed her messenger merely to ascertain the fact; while his silence when he had made the discovery, she could only attribute to his now believing that her regard for Mr. Belfield was too serious for raillery.

Doubly, however, she rejoiced at the generosity of Mr. Rupil, as it rendered wholly unnecessary her further interference: for she now saw with some alarm the danger to which benevolence itself, directed towards a youthful object, might expose her.

C H A P. VI.

A REMONSTRANCE.

C E C I L I A returned home so late, that she was summoned to the dining parlour the moment she entered the house. Her morning

ing dress, and her long absence, excited much curiosity in Mrs. Harrel, which a quick succession of questions evasively answered soon made general; and Sir Robert Floyer, turning to her with a look of surprise, said, "If you have such freaks as these, Miss Beverley, I must begin to enquire a little more into your proceedings."

"That, Sir," said Cecilia, very coldly, "would ill repay your trouble."

"When we get her to Violet-Bank," cried Mr. Harrel, "we shall be able to keep a better watch over her."

"I hope so," answered Sir Robert; "though, faith, she has been so demure, that I never supposed she did any thing but read sermons. However, I find there's no going upon trust with women, any more than with money."

"Ay, Sir Robert," cried Mrs. Harrel, "you know I always advised you not to be quite so easy, and I am sure I really think you deserve a little severity, for not being more afraid."

"Afraid of what, madam?" cried the baronet; "of a young lady's walking out without me? Do you think I wish to be any restraint upon Miss Beverley's time in a morning, while I have the happiness of waiting upon her every afternoon?"

Cecilia was thunderstruck by this speech, which not only expressed an open avowal of
his

his pretensions, but a confident security of his success. She was shocked that a man of such principles should even for a moment presume upon her favour, and irritated at the stubbornness of Mr. Harrel in not acquainting him with her refusal.

His intimation of coming to the house for *the happiness of waiting upon her*, made her determine, without losing a moment, to seek herself an explanation with him: while the discovery that he was included in the Easter party, which various other concomitant causes had already rendered disagreeable to her, made her look forward to that purposed expedition with nothing but unwillingness and distaste.

But though her earnestness to conclude this affair made her now put herself voluntarily in the way of the Baronet, she found her plan always counteracted by Mr. Harrel, who, with an officiousness too obvious to pass for chance, constantly stopt the progress of any discourse in which he did not himself bear a part. A more passionate admirer might not have been so easily defeated; but Sir Robert, too proud for solicitation, and too indolent for assiduity, was very soon checked, because very soon wearied.

The whole evening, therefore, to her infinite mortification, passed away without affording her any opportunity of making known to him his mistake.

Her

Her next effort was to remonstrate with Mr. Harrel himself; but this scheme was not more easy of execution than the other, since Mr. Harrel, suspecting she meant again to dun him for her money, avoided all separate conversation with her so skilfully, that she could not find a moment to make him hear her.

She then resolved to apply to his lady; but here her success was not better. Mrs. Harrel, dreading another lecture upon œconomy, peevishly answered to her request of a conference, that she was not very well, and could not talk gravely.

Cecilia, justly offended with them all, had now no resource but in Mr. Monckton, whose counsel for effectually dismissing the baronet, she determined to solicit by the first opportunity.

The moment, therefore, that she next saw him, she acquainted him with the speeches of Sir Robert and the behaviour of Mr. Harrel.

There needed no rhetoric to point out to Mr. Monckton the danger of suffering such expectations, or the impropriety of her present situation: he was struck with both in a manner the most forcible, and spared not for warmth of expression to alarm her delicacy, or add to her displeasure. But chiefly he was exasperated against Mr. Harrel, assuring her there could be no doubt but that he had some particular interest in so strenuously and

artfully supporting the pretensions of Sir Robert. Cecilia endeavoured to refute this opinion, which she regarded as proceeding rather from prejudice than justice; but when she mentioned that the baronet was invited to spend the Easter holidays at Violet Bank, he represented with such energy the consequent constructions of the world, as well as the unavoidable encouragement such intimacy would imply, that he terrified her into an earnest entreaty to suggest to her some way of deliverance.

“There is only one;” answered he, “you must peremptorily refuse to go to Violet Bank yourself. If, after what has passed, you are included in the same party with Sir Robert, you give a sanction yourself to the reports already circulated of your engagements with him: and the effect of such a sanction will be more serious than you can easily imagine, since the knowledge that a connection is believed in the world, frequently, if not generally, leads by imperceptible degrees to its real ratification.”

Cecilia, with the utmost alacrity, promised implicitly to follow his advice, whatever might be the opposition of Mr. Harrel. He quitted her, therefore, with unusual satisfaction, happy in his power over her mind, and anticipating with secret rapture the felicity he had in reserve from visiting her during the absence of the family.

As

As no private interview was necessary for making known her intention of giving up the Easter party, which was to take place in two days time, she mentioned the next morning her design of spending the holidays in town, when Mr. Harrel fauntered into the breakfast room to give some commission to his lady.

At first he only laughed at her plan, gaily rallying her upon her love of solitude; but when he found it was serious, he very warmly opposed it, and called upon Mrs. Harrel to join in his expostulations. That lady complied, but in so faint a manner, that Cecilia soon saw she did not wish to prevail; and with a concern that cost her infinite pain, now finally perceived that not only all her former affection was subsided into indifference, but that, since she had endeavoured to abridge her amusements, she regarded her as a spy, and dreaded her as the censor of her conduct.

Mean while Mr. Arnott, who was present, though he interfered not in the debate, waited the event with anxiety; naturally hoping her objections arose from her dislike of Sir Robert, and secretly resolving to be guided himself by her motions.

Cecilia at length, tired of the importunities of Mr. Harrel, gravely said, that if he desired to hear the reasons which obliged her to refuse his request, she was ready to communicate them.

Mr. Harrel, after a little hesitation, accompanied her into another room.

She then declared her resolution not to live under the same roof with Sir Robert, and very openly expressed her vexation and displeasure that he so evidently persisted in giving that gentleman encouragement.

“ My dear Miss Beverley,” answered he, carelessly, “ when young ladies will not know their own minds, it is necessary some friend should tell it them: you were certainly very favourable to Sir Robert but a short time ago, and so, I dare say, you will be again, when you have seen more of him.”

“ You amaze me, Sir!” cried Cecilia: “ when was I favourable to him? Has he not always and regularly been my aversion?”

“ I fancy,” answered Mr. Harrel, laughing, “ you will not easily persuade him to think so; your behaviour at the Opera-house was ill calculated to give him that notion.”

“ My behaviour at the Opera-house, Sir, I have already explained to you; and if Sir Robert himself has any doubts, either from that circumstance or from any other, pardon me if I say they can only be attributed to your unwillingness to remove them. I entreat you, therefore, to trifle with him no longer, nor to subject me again to the freedom of implications extremely disagreeable to me.”

“ O fie,

“ O fie, fie, Miss Beverley ! after all that has passed, after his long expectations, and his constant attendance, you cannot for a moment think seriously of discarding him.”

Cecilia, equally surpris'd and provok'd by this speech, could not for a moment tell how to answer it ; and Mr. Harrel, wilfully misinterpreting her silence, took her hand, and said, “ Come, I am sure you have too much honour to make a fool of such a man as Sir Robert Floyer. . There is not a woman in town who will not envy your choice, and I assure you there is not a man in England I would so soon recommend to you.”

He would then have hurried her back to the next room ; but, drawing away her hand with undisguis'd resentment, “ No, Sir,” she cried, “ this must not pass ! my positive rejection of Sir Robert the instant you communicated to me his proposals, you can neither have forgotten nor mistaken : and you must not wonder if I acknowledge myself extremely disobliged by your unaccountable perseverance in refusing to receive my answer.”

“ Young ladies who have been brought up in the country,” returned Mr. Harrel, with his usual negligence, “ are always so high flown in their notions, it is difficult to deal with them ; but as I am much better acquainted with the world than you can be, you must give me leave to tell you, that if,

after all, you refuse Sir Robert, it will be using him very ill."

"Why will you say so, Sir," cried Cecilia, "when it is utterly impossible you can have formed so preposterous an opinion. Pray hear me, however, finally, and pray tell Sir Robert——"

"No, no," interrupted he, with affected gaiety, "you shall manage it all your own way; I will have nothing to do with the quarrels of lovers."

And then, with a pretended laugh, he hastily left her.

Cecilia was so much incensed by this impracticable behaviour, that instead of returning to the family, she went directly to her own room. It was easy for her to see that Mr. Harrel was bent upon using every method he could devise, to entangle her into some engagement with Sir Robert, and though she could not imagine the meaning of such a scheme, the littleness of his behaviour excited her contempt, and the long-continued error of the Baronet gave her the utmost uneasiness. She again determined to seek an explanation with him herself, and immovably to refuse joining the party to Violet Bank.

The following day, while the ladies and Mr. Arnott were at breakfast, Mr. Harrel came into the room to enquire if they should all be ready to set off for his villa by ten o'clock the next day. Mrs. Harrel and her
brother

brother answered in the affirmative; but Cecilia was silent, and he turned to her and repeated his question.

“Do you think me so capricious, Sir,” said she, “that after telling you but yesterday I could not be of your party, I shall tell you to-day that I can?”

“Why you do not really mean to remain in town by yourself?” replied he, “you cannot suppose that will be an eligible plan for a young lady. On the contrary, it will be so very improper, that I think myself, as your Guardian, obliged to oppose it.”

Amazed at this authoritative speech, Cecilia looked at him with a mixture of mortification and anger; but knowing it would be vain to resist his power if he was resolute to exert it, she made not any answer.

“Besides,” he continued, “I have a plan for some alterations in the house during my absence; and I think your room, in particular, will be much improved by them: but it will be impossible to employ any workmen, if we do not all quit the premises.”

This determined persecution now seriously alarmed her; she saw that Mr. Harrel would omit no expedient or stratagem to encourage the addresses of Sir Robert, and force her into his presence; and she began next to apprehend that her connivance in his conduct might be presumed upon by that gentleman: she resolved, therefore, as the last and only

effort in her power for avoiding him, to endeavour to find an accommodation at the house of Mrs. Delvile, during the excursion to Violet Bank: and if, when she returned to Portman-Square, the Baronet still persevered in his attendance, to intreat her friend Mr. Monckton would take upon himself the charge of undeceiving him.

C H A P. VII.

A V I C T O R Y.

AS not a moment was now to be lost, Cecilia had no sooner suggested this scheme, than she hastened to St. James's Square, to try its practicability.

She found Mrs. Delville alone, and still at breakfast.

After the first compliments were over, while she was considering in what manner to introduce her proposal, Mrs. Delvile herself led to the subject, by saying, "I am very sorry to hear we are so soon to lose you; but I hope Mr. Harrel does not intend to make any long stay at his villa; for if he does, I shall

shall be half tempted to come and run away with you from him."

"And that," said Cecilia, delighted with this opening, "would be an honour I am *more* than half tempted to desire."

"Why indeed your leaving London at this time," continued Mrs. Delvile, "is, for me, particularly unfortunate, as, if I could now be favoured with your visits, I should doubly value them; for Mr. Delvile is gone to spend the holidays at the Duke of Derwent's, whither I was not well enough to accompany him; my son has his own engagements, and there are so few people I can bear to see, that I shall live almost entirely alone."

"If I," cried Cecilia, "in such a situation might hope to be admitted, how gladly for that happiness would I exchange my expedition to Violet Bank!"

"You are very good, and very amiable," said Mrs. Delvile, "and your society would, indeed, give me infinite satisfaction. Yet I am no enemy to solitude; on the contrary, company is commonly burthensome to me; I find few who have any power to give me entertainment, and even of those few, the chief part have in their manners, situation, or characters, an unfortunate *something*; that generally renders a near connection with them inconvenient or disagreeable. There are, indeed, so many draw-backs to regard

and intimacy, from pride, from propriety, and various other collateral causes, that rarely as we meet with people of brilliant parts, there is almost ever some objection to our desire of meeting them again. Yet to live wholly alone is cheerless and depressing; and with you, at least," taking Cecilia's hand, "I find not one single obstacle to oppose to a thousand inducements, which invite me to form a friendship that I can only hope may be as lasting, as I am sure it will be pleasant."

Cecilia expressed her sense of this partiality in the warmest terms; and Mrs. Delvile, soon discovering by her manner that she took not any delight in her intended visit to Violet Bank, began next to question her whether it would be possible for her to give it up.

She instantly answered in the affirmative.

"And would you really be so obliging," cried Mrs. Delvile, with some surprise, "as to bestow upon me the time you had destined for this gay excursion?"

"Most willingly," answered Cecilia, "if you are so good as to wish it."

"But can you also——for you must by no means remain alone in Portman-Square,——manage to live entirely in my house till Mr. Harrel's return?"

To this proposal, which was what she most desired, Cecilia gave a glad assent; and Mrs. Delvile, extremely pleased with her compliance,

ance, promised to have an apartment prepared for her immediately.

She then hastened home, to announce her new plan.

This she took occasion to do when the family was assembled at dinner. The surprize with which she was heard was very general: Sir Robert seemed at a loss what conclusion to draw from her information; Mr. Arnott was half elated with pleasure, and half depressed with apprehension; Mrs. Harrel wondered, without any other sensation; and Mr. Harrel himself was evidently the most concerned of the party.

Every effort of persuasion and importunity he now essayed to prevail upon her to give up this scheme, and still accompany them to the villa; but she coolly answered that her engagement with Mrs. Delvile was decided, and she had appointed to wait upon her the next morning.

When her resolution was found so steady, a general ill-humour took place of surprize: Sir Robert now had the air of a man who thought himself affronted; Mr. Arnott was wretched from a thousand uncertainties; Mrs. Harrel, indeed, was still the most indifferent; but Mr. Harrel could hardly repress his disappointment and anger.

Cecilia, however, was all gaiety and pleasure: in removing only from the house of one guardian to another, she knew she could

not to be opposed; and the flattering readiness with which Mrs. Delvile had anticipated her request, without enquiring into her motives, had relieved her from a situation which now grew extremely distressing, without giving to her the pain of making complaints of Mr. Harrel. The absence of Mr. Delvile contributed to her happiness, and she much rejoiced in having now the prospect of a speedy opportunity to explain to his son, whatever had appeared mysterious in her conduct respecting Mr. Belfield. If she had any thing to regret, it was merely the impossibility, at this time, of waiting for the counsel of Mr. Monckton.

The next morning, while the family was in the midst of preparation for departure, she took leave of Mrs. Harrel, who faintly lamented the loss of her company, and then hastily made her compliments to Mr. Harrel and Mr. Arnott, and putting herself into a chair, was conveyed to her new habitation.

Mrs. Delvile received her with the most distinguished politeness; she conducted her to the apartment which had been prepared for her, led her to the library, which she desired her to make use of as her own, and gave her the most obliging charges to remember that she was in a house of which she had the command.

Young Delvile did not make his appearance

ance till dinner time. Cecilia, from recollecting the strange situations in which she had lately been seen by him, blushed extremely when she first met his eyes; but finding him gay and easy, general in his conversation, and undefining in his looks, she soon recovered from her embarrassment, and passed the rest of the day without restraint or uneasiness.

Every hour she spent with Mrs. Delvile, contributed to raise in her esteem the mind and understanding of that lady. She found, indeed, that it was not for nothing she was accused of pride, but she found at the same time so many excellent qualities, so much true dignity of mind, and so noble a spirit of liberality, that however great was the respect she seemed to demand, it was always inferior to what she felt inclined to pay.

Nor was young Delvile less rapid in the progress he made in her favour; his character, upon every opportunity of shewing it, rose in her opinion, and his disposition and manners had a mingled sweetness and vivacity that rendered his society attractive, and his conversation spirited.

Here, therefore, Cecilia experienced that happiness she so long had coveted in vain: her life was neither public nor private, her amusements were neither dissipated nor retired; the company she saw were either people of high rank or strong parts, and their
visits

visits were neither frequent nor long. The situation she quitted gave a zest to that into which she entered, for she was now no longer shocked by extravagance or levity, no longer tormented with addresses which disgusted her, nor mortified by the ingratitude of the friend she had endeavoured to serve. All was smooth and serene, yet lively and interesting.

. Her plan, however, of clearing to young Delvile his mistakes concerning Belfield, she could not put in execution; for he now never led to the subject, though he was frequently alone with her, nor seemed at all desirous to renew his former raillery, or repeat his enquiries. She wondered at this change in him, but chose rather to wait the revival of his own curiosity, than to distress or perplex herself by contriving methods of explanation.

Situated thus happily, she had now one only anxiety, which was to know whether, and in what manner, Mr. Belfield had received his surgeon, as well as the actual state of his own and his sister's affairs: but the fear of again encountering young Delvile in suspicious circumstances, deterred her at present from going to their house. Yet her natural benevolence, which partial convenience never lulled to sleep, impressing her with an apprehension that her services might be wanted, she was induced to write to Miss Belfield, though she forbore to visit her.

Her

Her letter was short, but kind and to the purpose: she apologized for her officiousness, desired to know if her brother was better, and entreated her, in terms the most delicate, to acquaint her if yet she would accept from her any assistance.

She sent this letter by her servant, who, after waiting a considerable time, brought her the following answer:

To Miss BEVERLEY.

Ah madam! your goodness quite melts me! we want nothing, however, yet, though I fear we shall not say so much longer. But though I hope I shall never forget myself so as to be proud and impertinent, I will rather struggle with any hardship than beg, for I will not disoblige my poor brother by any fault that I can help, especially now he is fallen so low. But, thank heaven, his wound has at last been dressed, for the surgeon has found him out, and he attends him for nothing; though my brother is willing to part with every thing he is worth in the world, rather than owe that obligation to him: yet I often wonder why he hates so to be obliged, for when he was rich himself he was always doing something to oblige other people. But I fear the surgeon thinks him very bad! for he won't speak to us when we follow him down stairs.

I am

I am sadly ashamed to send this bad writing, but I dare not ask my brother for any help, because he would only be angry that I wrote any thing about him at all; but indeed I have seen too little good come of pride to think of imitating it; and as I have not his genius, I am sure there is no need I should have his defects: ill, therefore, as I write, you, madam, who have so much goodness and gentleness, would forgive it, I believe, if it was worse, almost. And though we are not in need of your kind offers, it is a great comfort to me to think there is a lady in the world that, if we come to be quite destitute, and if the proud heart of my poor unhappy brother should be quite broke down, will look upon our distress with pity, and generously help us from quite sinking under it. I remain,

Madam,

with the most humble respect,
your ever most obliged
humble servant,

HENRIETTA BELFIELD.

Cecilia, much moved by the simplicity of this letter, determined that her very first visit from Portman-Square should be to its fair and innocent writer. And having now an assurance that she was in no immediate distress, and that her brother was actually under Mr. Rupil's care, she dismissed from her

her mind the only subject of uneasiness that at present had endeavoured to disturb it, and gave herself wholly up to the delightful serenity of unallayed happiness.

Few are the days of unmixed felicity which we acknowledge while we experience, though many are those we deplore, when by sorrow taught their value, and by misfortune, their loss. Time with Cecilia now glided on with such rapidity, that before she thought the morning half over, the evening was closed, and ere she was sensible the first week was past, the second was departed for ever. More and more pleased with the inmates of her new habitation, she found in the abilities of Mrs. Delvile sources inexhaustible of entertainment, and in the disposition and sentiments of her son something so concordant to her own, that almost every word he spoke shewed the sympathy of their minds, and almost every look which caught her eyes was a reciprocation of intelligence. Her heart, deeply wounded of late by unexpected indifference, and undeserved mortification, was now, perhaps, more than usually susceptible of those penetrating and exquisite pleasures which friendship and kindness possess the highest powers of bestowing. Easy, gay, and airy, she only rose to happiness, and only retired to rest; and not merely heightened was her present enjoyment by her past disappointment, but, carrying her retrospec-
tion

tion to her earliest remembrance, she still found her actual situation more peculiarly adapted to her taste and temper, than any she had hitherto at any time experienced.

The very morning that the destined fortnight was elapsed, she received a note from Mrs. Harrel, with information of her arrival in town, and an entreaty that she would return to Portman-Square.

Cecilia, who, thus happy, had forgot to mark the progress of time, was now all amazement to find the term of her absence so soon past. She thought of going back with the utmost reluctance, and of quitting her new abode with the most lively regret. The representations of Mr. Monckton daily lost their force, and notwithstanding her dislike of Mr. Delvile, she had no wish so earnest as that of being settled in his family for the rest of her minority.

To effect this was her next thought; yet she knew not how to make the proposal; but from the uncommon partiality of Mrs. Delvile, she hoped, with a very little encouragement, she would lead to it herself.

Here, however, she was disappointed; Mrs. Delvile, when she heard of the summons from the Harrels, expressed her sorrow at losing her in terms of the most flattering regret, yet seemed to think the parting indispensable, and dropt not the most distant hint of attempting to prevent it.

Cecilia,

Cecilia, vexed and disconcerted, then made arrangements for her departure, which she fixed for the next morning.

The rest of this day, unlike every other which for the last fortnight had preceded it, was passed with little appearance, and no reality of satisfaction: Mrs. Delvile was evidently concerned, her son openly avowed his chagrin, and Cecilia felt the utmost mortification; yet, though every one was discontented, no effort was made towards obtaining any delay.

The next morning during breakfast, Mrs. Delvile very elegantly thanked her for granting to her so much of her time, and earnestly begged to see her in future whenever she could be spared from her other friends; protesting she was now so accustomed to her society, that she should require both long and frequent visits to soften the separation. This request was very eagerly seconded by young Delvile, who warmly spoke his satisfaction that his mother had found so charming a friend, and unaffectedly joined in her entreaties that the intimacy might be still more closely cemented.

Cecilia had no great difficulty in according her compliance to those demands, of which the kindness and cordiality somewhat lessened her disturbance at the parting.

When Mrs. Harrel's carriage arrived,
Mrs.

Mrs. Delvile took a most affectionate leave of her, and her son attended her to the coach.

In her way down stairs, he stopt her for a few moments, and in some confusion said, "I wish much to apologize to Miss Beverley, before her departure, for the very gross mistake of which I have been guilty. I know not if it is possible she can pardon me, and I hardly know myself by what perversity and blindness I persisted so long in my error."

"O," cried Cecilia, much rejoiced at this voluntary explanation, "if you are but convinced you were really in an error, I have nothing more to wish. Appearances, indeed, were so strangely against me, that I ought not, perhaps, to wonder they deceived you."

"This is being candid indeed," answered he, again leading her on: "and in truth, though your anxiety was obvious, its cause was obscure, and where any thing is left to conjecture, opinion interferes, and the judgment is easily warped. My own partiality, however, for Mr. Belfield, will I hope plead my excuse, as from that, and not from any prejudice against the Baronet, my mistake arose: on the contrary, so highly I respect your taste and your discernment, that your approbation, when known, can scarcely fail of securing mine."

Great as was the astonishment of Cecilia at the conclusion of this speech; she was at the coach door before she could make any
answer;

answer; but Delvile, perceiving her surprise, added, while he handed her in, "Is it possible — but no, it is *not* possible I should be again mistaken. I forbore to speak at all, till I had information by which I could not be misled."

"I know not in what unaccountable obscurity," cried Cecilia, "I, or my affairs, may be involved, but I perceive that the cloud which I had hoped was dissipated, is thicker and more impenetrable than ever."

Delvile then bowed to her, with a look that accused her of insincerity, and the carriage drove away.

Teazed by these eternal mistakes, and provoked to find that though the object of her supposed partiality was so frequently changed, the notion of her positive engagement with one of the duellists was invariable, she resolved, with all the speed in her power, to commission Mr. Monckton to wait upon Sir Robert Floyer, and in her own name give a formal rejection to his proposals, and desire him thenceforward to make known, by every opportunity, their total independance of each other: for sick of debating with Mr. Harrel, and detesting all intercourse with Sir Robert, she now dropt her design of seeking an explanation herself.

She was received by Mrs. Harrel with the same coldness with which she had parted from her. That lady appeared now to have some
uneasiness

uneasiness upon her mind, and Cecilia endeavoured to draw from her its cause; but far from seeking any alleviation in friendship, she studiously avoided her, seeming pained by her conversation, and reproached by her sight. Cecilia perceived this encreasing reserve with much concern, but with more indignation, conscious that her good offices had merited a better reception, and angry to find that her advice had not merely failed of success, but even exposed her to aversion.

Mr. Harrel, on the contrary, behaved to her with unusual civility, seemed eager to oblige her, and desirous to render his house more agreeable to her than ever. But in this he did not prosper; for Cecilia, immediately upon her return, looking in her apartment for the projected alterations, and finding none had been made, was so disgusted by such a detection of duplicity, that he sunk yet lower than before in her opinion, and she repined at the necessity she was under of any longer continuing his guest.

The joy of Mr. Arnott at again seeing her, was visible and sincere; and not a little was it encreased by finding that Cecilia, who sought not more to avoid Mr. Harrel and Sir Robert, than she was herself avoided by Mrs. Harrel, talked with pleasure to nobody else in the house, and scarcely attempted to conceal that he was the only one of the family who possessed any portion of her esteem.

Even

Even Sir Robert appeared now to have formed a design of paying her rather more respect than he had hitherto thought necessary; but the violence he did himself was so evident, and his imperious nature seemed so repugnant to the task, that his insolence, breaking forth by starts, and checked only by compulsion, was but the more conspicuous from his inadequate efforts to disguise it.

C H A P. VIII.

A COMPLAINT.

AS Cecilia now found herself cleared, at least, of all suspicions of harbouring too tender a regard for Mr. Belfield, her objections to visiting his sister were removed, and the morning after her return to Mr. Harrel's she went in a chair to Swallow-street.

She sent her servant up stairs to enquire if she might be admitted, and was immediately taken into the room where she had twice before been received.

In a few minutes Miss Belfield, softly opening and shutting the door of the next apartment,

apartment, made her appearance. She looked thin and pale, but much gratified by the sight of Cecilia. "Ah Madam!" she cried, "you are good indeed not to forget us! and you can little think how it cheers and consoles me, that such a lady as you can condescend to be kind to me. It is quite the only pleasure that I have now in the whole world."

"I grieve that you have no greater;" cried Cecilia, "you seem much fatigued and harrassed. How is your brother? I fear you neglect your own health, by too much attention to his."

"No, indeed, madam; my mother does every thing for him herself, and hardly suffers any body else to go near him."

"What, then, makes you so melancholy?" said Cecilia, taking her hand; "you do not look well; your anxiety, I am sure, is too much for your strength."

"How should I look well, madam," answered she, "living as I live? however, I will not talk of myself, but of my brother.—O he is so ill! indeed I am sadly, sadly afraid he will never be well again!"

"What does his surgeon say? you are too tender, and too much frightened to be any judge."

"It is not that I think myself he will die of his wound, for Mr. Rupil says the wound is almost nothing; but he is in a constant fever,

fever, and so thin and so weak, that indeed it is almost impossible he should recover!"

"You are too apprehensive," said Cecilia; "you know not what effect the country air may have upon him; there are many, many expedients that with so young a man may yet be successful."

"O no, the country air can do nothing for him! for I will not deceive you, madam, for that would be doubly a fault when I am so ready in blaming other people for wearing false appearances: besides you are so good and so gentle, that it quite composes me to talk with you. So I will honestly speak the truth, and the whole truth at once; my poor brother is lost—O I fear for ever lost!—all by his own unhappy pride! he forgets his father was a tradesman, he is ashamed of all his family, and his whole desire is to live among the grandest people, as if he belonged to no other. And now that he can no longer do that, he takes the disappointment so to heart that he cannot get the better of it; and he told me this morning that he wished he was dead, for he did not know why he should live only to see his own ruin! But when he saw how I cried at his saying so, he was very sorry indeed, for he has always been the kindest brother in the world, when he has been away from the great folks who have spoilt him: but why, said he, Henrietta, why would you have me live, when instead

of raising you and my poor mother into an higher station, I am sunk so low, that I only help to consume your own poor pittances to support me in my disgrace!"

"I am sorry indeed," said Cecilia, "to find he has so deep a sense of the failure of his expectations: but how happens it that *you* are so much wiser? Young and inexperienced as you are, and early as you must have been accustomed, from your mother as well as from Mr. Belfield, to far other doctrine, the clearness of your judgment, and the justness of your remarks, astonish as much as they charm me."

"Ah madam! brought up as I have been brought up, there is little wonder I should see the danger of an high education, let me be ever so ignorant of every thing else; for I, and all my sisters, have been the sufferers the whole time: and while we were kept backward that he might be brought forward, while we were denied comforts, that he might have luxuries, how could we help seeing the evil of so much vanity, and wishing we had all been brought up according to our proper station? instead of living in continual inconvenience, and having one part of a family struggling with distress, only to let another part of it appear in a way he had no right to!"

"How rationally," said Cecilia, "have you considered this subject! and how much do

do I honour you for the affection you retain for your brother, notwithstanding the wrongs you have suffered to promote his elevation!"

"Indeed he deserves it; take but from him that one fault, pride, and I believe he has not another: and humoured and darling child as from his infancy he has always been, who at that can wonder, or be angry?"

"And has he still no plan, no scheme for his future destination?"

"No, madam, none at all; and that it is makes him so miserable, and being so miserable makes him so ill, for Mr. Rupil says that with such uneasiness upon his mind, he can never, in his present low state, get well. O it is melancholy to see how he is altered! and how he has lost all his fine spirits! he that used to be the life of us all! — And now he hardly ever speaks a word, or if he does, he says something so sorrowful that it cuts us to the soul! But yesterday, when my mother and I thought he was asleep, he lifted up his head, and looked at us both with the tears in his eyes, which almost broke our hearts to see, and then, in a low voice, he said, "what a lingering illness is this! Ah, my dear mother, you and poor Henrietta ought to wish it quicker over! for should I recover, my life, hereafter, will but linger like this illness." And afterwards he called out, "what on earth is to become of me? I shall never have health for the army, nor interest, nor

means ; what am I to do ? subsist in the very prime of my life upon the bounty of a widowed mother ! or, with such an education, such connections as mine, enter at last into some mean and fordid business ?”

“ It seems then,” said Cecilia, “ he now less wants a physician than a friend.”

“ He has a friend, madam, a noble friend, would he but accept his services ; but he never sees him without suffering fresh vexation, and his fever encreases after every visit he pays him.”

“ Well,” cried Cecilia, rising, “ I find we shall not have an easy task to manage him ; but keep up your spirits, and assure yourself he shall not be lost, if it be possible to save him.”

She then, though with much fearfulness of offending, once more made an offer of her purse. Miss Belfield no longer started at the proposal ; yet gratefully thanking her, said she was not in any immediate distress, and did not dare risk the displeasure of her brother, unless driven to it by severe necessity. Cecilia, however, drew from her a promise that she would apply to her in any sudden difficulty, and charged her never to think herself without a banker while her direction was known to her.

She then bid her adieu, and returned home ; meditating the whole way upon some plan of employment and advantage for Mr. Belfield, which

which by clearing his prospects, might revive his spirits, and facilitate his recovery: for since his mind was so evidently the seat of his disease, she saw that unless she could do more for him, she had yet done nothing.

Her meditation, however, turned to no account; she could suggest nothing, for she was ignorant what was eligible to suggest. The stations and employments of men she only knew by occasionally hearing that such were their professions, and such their situations in life; but with the means and gradations by which they arose to them she was wholly unacquainted.

Mr. Monckton, her constant resource in all cases of difficulty, immediately occurred to her as her most able counsellor, and she determined by the first opportunity to consult with him upon the subject, certain of advice the most judicious from his experience and knowledge of the world.

But though she rested upon him her serious expectations of assistance, another idea entered her mind not less pleasant, though less promising of utility: this was to mention her views to young Delvile. He was already, she knew, well informed of the distress of Mr. Belfield, and she hoped, by openly asking his opinion, to confirm to him her freedom from any engagement with that gentleman, and convince him, at the same time, by her application to himself, that she was equally clear of any tie with the Baronet.

C H A P. IX.

A S Y M P A T H Y.

THE next day Cecilia had appointed to spend in St. James's-Square; and she knew by experience that in its course, she should in all probability find some opportunity of speaking with Delvile alone,

This accordingly happened; for in the evening Mrs. Delvile quitted the room for a few moments to answer a letter. Cecilia, then, left with her son, said, after a little hesitation, "Will you not think me very strange if I should take the liberty to consult you upon some business?"

"I already think you very strange," answered he; "so strange that I know not any one who at all resembles you. But what is this consultation in which you will permit me to have a voice?"

"You are acquainted, I believe, with the distress of Mr. Belfield?"

"I am; and I think his situation the most melancholy that can be imagined. I pity him with my whole soul, and nothing would give me greater joy than an opportunity of *-serving him.*"

"He

“He is, indeed, much to be compassionated,” returned Cecilia, “and if something is not speedily done for him, I fear he will be utterly lost. The agitation of his mind baffles all the power of medicine, and till that is relieved, his health can never be restored. His spirit, probably always too high for his rank in life, now struggles against every attack of sickness and of poverty, in preference to yielding to his fate, and applying to his friends for their interest and assistance. I mean not to vindicate his obduracy, yet I wish it were possible it could be surmounted. Indeed I dread to think what may become of him! feeling at present nothing but wretchedness and pain, looking forward in future to nothing but ruin and despair!”

“There is no man,” cried young Delvile, with emotion, “who might not rather envy than pity sufferings which give rise to such compassion!”

“Pecuniary assistance he will not accept,” she continued, “and, indeed, his mind is superior to receiving consolation from such temporary relief; I wish him, therefore, to be put into some way of life by which his own talents, which have long enough amused the world, may at length become serviceable to himself. Do you think, Sir, this is possible?”

“How do I rejoice,” cried Delvile, colouring with pleasure while he spoke, “in

this flattering concurrence of our opinions! See, madam," taking from his pocket a letter, "how I have been this very morning occupied, in endeavouring to procure for Mr. Belfield some employment by which his education might be rendered useful, and his parts redound to his own credit and advantage."

He then broke the seal, and put into her hand a letter to a nobleman, whose son was soon going abroad, strongly recommending Belfield to him in capacity of a tutor.

A sympathy of sentiment so striking, impressed them at the same moment with surprise and esteem: Delvile earnestly regarded her with eyes of speaking admiration, while the occasion of his notice rendered it too pleasant to distress her, and filled her with an inward satisfaction which brightened her whole countenance.

She had only time, in a manner that strongly marked her approbation, to return the letter, before Mrs. Delvile again made her appearance.

During the rest of the evening but little was said; Cecilia was not talkative, and young Delvile was so absent, that three times his mother reminded him of an engagement to meet his father, who that night was expected at the Duke of Derwent's house in town, before he heard that she spoke to him,
and

and three times more before, when he had heard, he obeyed.

Cecilia, when she came back to Mr. Harrel's found the house full of company. She went into the drawing-room, but did not remain there long; she was grave and thoughtful, she wished to be alone, and by the earliest opportunity stole away to her own apartment.

Her mind was now occupied by new ideas, and her fancy was busied in the delineation of new prospects. She had been struck from her first meeting young Delville with an involuntary admiration of his manners and conversation; she had found upon every succeeding interview something further to approve, and felt for him a rising partiality which made her always see him with pleasure, and never part from him without a wish to see him again. Yet, as she was not of that inflammable nature which is always ready to take fire, as her passions were under the controul of her reason, and she suffered not her affections to triumph over her principles, she started at her danger the moment she perceived it, and instantly determined to give no weak encouragement to a prepossession which neither time nor intimacy had justified. She denied herself the deluding satisfaction of dwelling upon the supposition of his worth, was unusually assiduous to occupy all her time, that her heart might have

less leisure for imagination; and had she found that his character degenerated from the promise of his appearance, the well-regulated purity of her mind would soon have enabled her to have driven him wholly from her thoughts.

Such was her situation when the circumstances of her affairs occasioned her becoming an inmate of his house; and here she grew less guarded, because less clear-sighted to the danger of negligence, for the frequency of their conversations allowed her little time to consider their effects. If at first she had been pleased with his deportment and elegance, upon intimacy she was charmed with his disposition and his behaviour; she found him manly, generous, open-hearted and amiable, fond of literature, delighting in knowledge, kind in his temper, and spirited in his actions.

Qualities such as these, when recommended by high birth, a striking figure, and polished manners, formed but a dangerous companion for a young woman, who without the guard of any former prepossession, was so fervent an admirer of excellence as Cecilia. Her heart made no resistance, for the attack was too gentle and too gradual to alarm her vigilance, and therefore, though always sensible of the pleasure she received from his society, it was not till she returned to Portman-Square, after having lived under

the same roof with him for a fortnight, that she was conscious her happiness was no longer in her own power.

Mr. Harrel's house, which had never pleased her, now became utterly disgustful; she was wearied and uncomfortable; yet, willing to attribute her uneasiness to any other than the true cause, she fancied the house itself was changed, and that all its inhabitants and visitors were more than usually disagreeable: but this idle error was of short duration, the moment of self-conviction was at hand, and when Delvile presented her the letter he had written for Mr. Belfield, it flashed in her eyes!

This detection of the altered state of her mind, opened to her views and her hopes a scene entirely new, for neither the exertion of the most active benevolence, nor the steady course of the most virtuous conduct, sufficed any longer to wholly engage her thoughts, or constitute her felicity; she had purposes that came nearer home, and cares that threatened to absorb in themselves that heart and those faculties which hitherto had only seemed animated for the service of others.

Yet this loss of mental freedom gave her not much uneasiness, since the choice of her heart, though involuntary, was approved by her principles, and confirmed by her judgment. Young Delvile's situation in life was just what she wished, more elevated than her

own, yet not so exalted as to humble her with a sense of inferiority; his connections were honourable, his mother appeared to her the first of women, his character and disposition seemed formed to make her happy, and her own fortune was so large, that to the state of his she was indifferent.

Delighted with so flattering a union of inclination with propriety, she now began to cherish the partiality she at first had repressed, and thinking the future destination of her life already settled, looked forward with grateful joy to the prospect of ending her days with the man she thought most worthy to be entrusted with the disposal of her fortune.

She had not, indeed, any certainty that the regard of young Delvile was reciprocal, but she had every reason to believe he greatly admired her, and to suspect that his mistaken notion of her prior engagement, first with Mr. Belfield, and afterwards with Sir Robert Floyer, made him at present check those sentiments in her favour which, when that error was removed, she hoped to see encouraged.

Her purpose, therefore, was quietly to wait an explanation, which she rather wished retarded than forwarded, that her leisure and opportunity might be more for investigating his character, and saving herself from repentance.

C H A P. X.

A CONFLICT.

THE day following this happy intellectual arrangement, Cecilia was visited by Mr. Monckton. That gentleman, who had enquired for her immediately after the Harrels went to their villa, and who had flattered himself with reaping much advantage from their absence, by frequent meetings and confidential discourses, suffered the severest mortification when he found that her stay in town rendered her not the less inaccessible to him, since he had no personal acquaintance with the Delviles, and could not venture to present himself at their house.

He was now received by her with more than usual pleasure; the time had seemed long to her since she had conversed with him, and she was eager to ask his counsel and assistance in her affairs. She related to him the motives which had induced her to go to St. James's Square, and the incorrigible obstinacy with which Mr. Harrel still continued to encourage the addresses of Sir Robert Floyer; she earnestly entreated him to become her agent in a business to which
she

she was unequal, by expostulating in her cause with Mr. Harrel, and by calling upon Sir Robert himself to insist upon his foregoing his unauthorised pretensions.

Mr. Monckton listened eagerly to her account and request, and when she had finished, assured her he would deliberate upon each circumstance of the affair, and then maturely weigh every method he could devise, to extricate her from an embarrassment which now grew far too serious to be safely neglected.

“ I will not, however,” continued he, “ either act or give my opinion without further enquiry, as I am confident there is a mystery in this business which lies deeper than we can at present fathom. Mr. Harrel has doubtless purposes of his own to answer by this pretended zeal for Sir Robert; nor is it difficult to conjecture what they may be. Friendship, in a man of his light cast, is a mere cover, a mere name, to conceal a connection which has its basis solely in the licentious convenience of borrowing money, going to the same gaming house, and mutually communicating and boasting their mutual vices and intrigues, while, all the time, their regard for each other is equally hollow with their regard for truth and integrity.”

He then cautioned her to be extremely careful with respect to any money transactions with Mr. Harrel, whose splendid extravagance

travagance he assured her was universally known to exceed his fortune.

The countenance of Cecilia, during this exhortation, was testimony-sufficient to the penetrating eyes of Mr. Monckton that his advice came not too soon: a suspicion of the real state of the case speedily occurred to him, and he questioned her minutely upon the subject. She endeavoured to avoid making him any answer, but his discernment was too keen for her artificial evasion, and he very soon gathered all the particulars of her transactions with Mr. Harrel.

He was less alarmed at the sum she had lent him, which was rather within his expectations, than at the method she had been induced to take to procure it. He represented to her in the strongest manner the danger of imposition, nay of ruin, from the extortions and the craft of money-lenders; and he charged her upon no consideration to be tempted or persuaded again to have recourse to such perilous expedients.

She promised the most attentive observance of his advice; and then told him the acquaintance she had made with Miss Belfield, and her sorrow for the situation of her brother; though, satisfied for the present with the plan of young Delvile, she now gave up her design of soliciting his counsel.

In the midst of this conversation, a note was delivered to her from Mr. Delvile senior,

acquainting her with his return to town, and begging the favour of her to call in St. James's Square the next morning, as he wished to speak to her upon some business of importance.

The eager manner in which Cecilia accepted this invitation, and her repeated and earnest exclamation of wonder at what Mr. Delvile could have to say, past not unnoticed by Mr. Monckton; he instantly turned the discourse from the Belfields, the Hatrels, and the Baronet, to enquire how she had spent her time during her visit in St. James's Square, and what was her opinion of the family after her late opportunities of intimacy?

Cecilia answered that she had yet seen nothing more of Mr. Delvile, who had been absent the whole time, but with equal readiness and pleasure she replied to all his questions concerning his lady, expatiating with warmth and fervour upon her many rare and estimable qualities.

But when the same interrogatories were transferred to the son, she spoke no longer with the same ease, nor with her usual promptitude of sincerity; she was embarrassed, her answers were short, and she endeavoured to hasten from the subject.

Mr. Monckton remarked this change with the most apprehensive quickness, but forcing a smile, "Have you yet," he said, "observed

the family compact in which those people are bound to besiege you, and draw you into their snares?"

"No, indeed," cried Cecilia, much hurt by the question, "I am sure no such compact has been formed; and I am sure, too, that if you knew them better, you would yourself be the first to admire and do them justice."

"My dear Miss Beverley," cried he, "I know them already; I do not, indeed, visit them, but I am perfectly acquainted with their characters, which have been drawn to me by those who are most closely connected with them, and who have had opportunities of inspection which I hope will never fail to your share, since I am satisfied the trial would pain, though the proof would convince you."

"What then have you heard of them?" cried Cecilia, with much earnestness, "it is, at least, not possible any ill can be said of Mrs. Delvile."

"I beg your pardon," returned he, "Mrs. Delvile is not nearer perfection than the rest of her family, she has only more art in disguising her foibles; because, tho' she is the daughter of pride, she is the slave of interest."

"I see you have been greatly misinformed," said Cecilia warmly; "Mrs. Delvile is the noblest of women! she may, indeed,

deed, from her very exaltation, have enemies, but they are the enemies of envy, not of resentment, enemies raised by superior merit, not excited by injury or provocation!"

"You will know her better hereafter," said Mr. Monckton calmly, "I only hope your knowledge will not be purchased by the sacrifice of your happiness."

"And what knowledge of her, Sir," cried Cecilia, starting, "can have power to put my happiness in any danger?"

"I will tell you," answered he, "with all the openness you have a claim to from my regard, and then leave to time to shew if I am mistaken. The Delvile family, notwithstanding its ostentatious magnificence, I can solemnly assure you, is poor in every branch, alike lineal and collateral."

"But is it therefore the less estimable?"

"Yes, because the more rapacious. And while they count on each side Dukes, Earls and Barons in their genealogy, the very wealth with which, through your means, they project the support of their insolence, and which they will grasp with all the greediness of avarice, they will think honoured by being employed in their service, while the instrument, all amiable as she is, by which they attain it, will be constantly held down as the disgrace of their alliance."

Cecilia, stung to the soul by this speech,
rose

rose from her chair, unwilling to answer it, yet unable to conceal how much it shocked her. Mr. Monckton, perceiving her emotion, followed her, and taking her hand, said, "I would not give this warning to one I thought too weak to profit from it; but as I am well-informed of the use that is meant to be made of your fortune, and the abuse that will follow of yourself, I think it right to prepare you for their artifices, which merely to point out may render abortive."

Cecilia, too much disturbed to thank him, drew back her hand, and continued silent. Mr. Monckton, reading through her displeasure the state of her affections, saw with terror the greatness of the danger which threatened him. He found, however, that the present was no time for enforcing objections, and perceiving he had already gone too far, though he was by no means disposed to recant, he thought it most prudent to retreat, and let her meditate upon his exhortation while its impression was yet strong in her mind.

He would now, therefore, have taken leave; but Cecilia, endeavouring to recollect herself, and fully persuaded that however he had shocked her, he had only her interest in view, stopt him, saying "You think me, perhaps, ungrateful, but believe me I am not; I must, however, acknowledge that your censure of Mrs. Delville hurts

me extremely. Indeed I cannot doubt her worthiness; I must still, therefore, plead for her, and I hope the time will come when you will allow I have not pleaded unjustly."

"Justly or unjustly," answered Mr. Monckton, "I am at least sure you can never plead vainly. I give up, therefore, to your opinion my attack of Mrs. Devile, and am willing from your commendations to suppose her the best of the race. Nay, I will even own that perhaps Mr. Delvile himself, as well as his lady, might pass through life and give but little offence, had they only themselves to think of, and no son to stimulate their arrogance."

"Is the son, then," said Cecilia faintly, "so much the most culpable?"

"The son, I believe," answered he, "is at least the chief incentive to insolence and ostentation in the parents, since it is for his sake they covet with such avidity honours and riches, since they plume themselves upon regarding him as the support of their name and family, and since their pride in him even surpasses their pride in their lineage and themselves."

"Ah! thought Cecilia, and of such a son who could help being proud!"

"Their purpose, therefore," he continued, "is to secure through his means your fortune, which they will no sooner obtain, than, to my certain knowledge, they mean instantly,
and

and most unmercifully, to employ it in repairing all their dilapidated estates."

And then he quitted the subject; and, with that guarded warmth which accompanied all his expressions, told her he would carefully watch for her honour and welfare, and, repeating his promise of endeavouring to discover the tie by which Mr. Harrel seemed bound to the Baronet, he left her—a prey himself to an anxiety yet more severe than that with which he had filled her! He now saw all his long-cherished hopes in danger of final destruction, and suddenly cast upon the brink of a precipice, where, while he struggled to protect them from falling, his eyes were dazzled by beholding them totter.

Mean while Cecilia, disturbed from the calm of soft serenity to which she had yielded every avenue of her soul, now looked forward with distress and uneasiness, even to the completion of the views which but a few minutes before had comprised all her notions of felicity. The alliance which so lately had seemed wholly unexceptionable, now appeared teeming with objections, and threatening with difficulties. The representations of Mr. Monckton had cruelly mortified her; well acquainted with his knowledge of the world, and wholly unsuspecting of his selfish motives, she gave to his assertions involuntary credit, and even while she attempted to combat

bat them, they made upon her mind an impression scarce ever to be erased.

Full, therefore, of doubt and inquietude, she passed the night in discomfort and irresolution, now determining to give way to her feelings, and now to be wholly governed by the counsel of Mr. Monckton.

C H A P. XI.

AN EXPECTATION.

IN this disposition of mind Cecilia the next morning obeyed the summons of Mr. Delvile, and for the first time went to St. James's Square in a humour to look for evil instead of good, and meanness instead of nobleness.

She was shewn into an apartment where she found Mr. Delvile alone, and was received by him, as usual, with the most stately solemnity.

When she was seated, "I have given you, Miss Beverley," said he, "the trouble of calling, in order to discuss with you the internal state of your affairs; a duty which, at this juncture, I hold to be incumbent upon my character. The delicacy due to
your

your sex would certainly have induced me to wait upon you myself for this purpose, but for the reasons I have already hinted to you, of fearing the people with whom you live might think it necessary to return my visit. Persons of low origin are commonly in those matters the most forward. Not, however, that I would prejudice you against them; though, for myself, it is fit I remember that a general and indiscriminate acquaintance, by levelling all ranks, does injury to the rites of society."

Ah! thought Cecilia, how infallible is Mr. Monckton! and how inevitably, in a family of which Mr. Delvile is the head, should I be cruelly *held down as the disgrace of their alliance!*

"I have applied," continued he, "to Mrs. Delvile, to know if the communication which I had recommended to you, and to which she had promised her attention, had yet passed; but I am informed you have not spoken to her upon the subject."

"I had nothing, Sir, to communicate," answered Cecilia, "and I had hoped, as Mrs. Delvile made no enquiries, she was satisfied she had nothing to hear."

"With respect to enquiries," said Mr. Delvile, "I fear you are not sufficiently aware of the distance between a lady of Mrs. Delvile's rank, both by birth and alliance, and such a young woman as Mrs. Harrel, whose

whose ancestors, but a short time since, were mere Suffolk farmers. But I beg your pardon; — I mean not any reflection upon yours: I have always heard they were very worthy people. And a farmer is certainly a very respectable person. Your father, I think, no more than the Dean your uncle, did nothing in that way himself?"

"No, Sir," said Cecilia drily, and much provoked by this contemptuous courtesy.

"I have always been told he was a very good sort of man: I knew none of the family myself, but the Dean. His connections with the Bishop of —, my relation, put him often in my way. Though his naming me for one of his trustees, I must own, was rather extraordinary; but I mean not to hurt you; on the contrary, I should be much concerned to give you any uneasiness."

Again Mr. Monckton arose in the mind of Cecilia, and again she acknowledged the truth of his strictures; and though she much wondered in what an harangue so pompous was to end, her disgust so far conquered her curiosity, that without hearing it she wished herself away.

"To return," said he, "to my purpose. The present period of your life is such as to render advice particularly seasonable; I am sorry, therefore, as I before said, you have not disclosed your situation to Mrs. Delvile. A young lady on the point of making an
5
establishment,

establishment, and with many engagements in her power, is extremely liable to be mistaken in her judgment, and therefore should solicit instruction from those who are able to acquaint her what connection would be most to her advantage. One thing, however, I am happy to commend, the young man who was wounded in the duel — I cannot recollect his name — is, I hear, totally out of the question.”

What next? thought Cecilia; though still she gave him no interruption, for the haughtiness of his manner was repulsive to reply.

“ My design, therefore, is to speak to you of Sir Robert Floyer. When I had last the pleasure of addressing you upon this subject, you may probably remember my voice was in his favour; but I then regarded him merely as the rival of an inconsiderable young man, to rescue you from whom he appeared an eligible person. The affair is now altered, that young man is thought of no more, and another rival comes forward, to whom Sir Robert is as inconsiderable as the first rival was to Sir Robert.”

Cecilia started at this information, livelier sensations stimulated her curiosity, and surmises in which she was most deeply interested quickened her attention.

“ This rival,” proceeded he, “ I should imagine no young lady would a moment hesitate in electing; he is every way the su-

perior of Sir Robert except in fortune, and the deficiencies of that the splendour of your own may amply supply."

The deepest crimson now tinged the cheeks of Cecilia; the prophecy of Mr. Monckton seemed immediately fulfilling, and she trembled with a rising conflict between her approbation of the offer, and her dread of its consequences.

"I know not, indeed," continued he, "in what estimation you may have been accustomed to hold rank and connection, nor whether you are impressed with a proper sense of their superiority and value; for early prejudices are not easily rooted out, and those who have lived chiefly with monied people, regard even birth itself as unimportant when compared with wealth."

The colour which first glowed in the cheeks of Cecilia from expectation, now rose yet higher from resentment: she thought herself already insulted by a prelude so ostentatious and humiliating to the proposals which were to follow; and she angrily determined, with whatever pain to her heart, to assert her own dignity, by refusing them at once, too well satisfied by what she now saw of the present, that Mr. Monckton had been just in his prediction of the future.

"Your rejection, therefore," continued he, "of this honourable offer, may perhaps have been merely the consequence of the principles

principles in which you have been educated.—

“ Rejection?” interrupted Cecilia, amazed, “ what rejection, Sir?”

“ Have you not refused the proposals of my Lord Ernolf for his son?”

“ Lord Ernolf? never! nor have I ever seen either his Lordship or his son but in public.”

“ That, replied Mr. Delvile, “ is little to the purpose; where the connection is a proper one, a young lady of delicacy has only to accede to it. But though this rejection came not immediately from yourself, it had doubtless your concurrence.”

“ It had not, Sir, even my knowledge.”

“ Your alliance then with Sir Robert Floyer is probably nearer a conclusion than I had imagined, for otherwise Mr. Harrel would not, without consulting you, have given the Earl so determinate an answer.

“ No, Sir,” said Cecilia, impatiently, “ my alliance with him was never more distant, nor do I mean it should ever approach more near.”

She was now little disposed for further conversation. Her heroic design of refusing young Delvile by no means reconciled her to the discovery she now made that he had not meant to address her; and though she was provoked and fretted at this new proof that Mr. Harrel scrupled neither assertions

nor actions to make her engagement with Sir Robert credited, her disappointment in finding that Mr. Delvile, instead of pleading the cause of his son, was exerting his interest for another person, affected her so much more nearly, that notwithstanding he still continued his parading harangue, she scarcely knew even the subject of his discourse, and seized the first opportunity of a cessation to rise and take her leave.

He asked her if she would not call upon Mrs. Delvile: but desirous to be alone, she declined the invitation: he then charged her to proceed no further with Sir Robert till he had made some enquiries concerning Lord Ernolf, and graciously promising his protection and counsel, suffered her to depart.

Cecilia now perceived she might plan her rejections, or study her dignity at her leisure, for neither Mr. Delvile nor his son seemed in any haste to put her fortitude to the proof. With regard, therefore, to their plots and intentions, Mr. Monckton she found was wrong, but with respect to their conduct and sentiments, she had every reason to believe him right: and though her heart refused to rejoice in escaping a trial of its strength, her judgment was so well convinced that his painting was from the life, that she determined to conquer her partiality for young Delvile, since she looked forward to nothing but mortification in a connexion with his *family*.

B O O K IV.

C H A P T E R I.

A N A G I T A T I O N .

WITH this intention, and every faculty of her mind absorbed in reflecting upon the reasons which gave rise to it, she returned to Portman-square.

As her chair was carried into the hall, she observed, with some alarm, a look of consternation among the servants, and an appearance of confusion in the whole house. She was proceeding to her own room, intending to enquire of her maid if any evil had happened, when she was crossed upon the stairs by Mr. Harrel, who passed her with an air so wild and perturbed, that he hardly seemed to know her.

Frightened and amazed, she stopt short, irresolute which way to go; but, hastily returning, he beckened her to follow him.

She obeyed, and he led her to the library. He then shut the door, and abruptly seizing her hand, called out, "Miss Beverley, I am ruined! — I am undone! — I am blasted for ever!"

“ I hope not, Sir !” said Cecilia, extremely terrified, “ I hope not ! Where is Mrs. Harrel ? ”

“ O I know not ! I know not ! ” cried he, in a frantic manner, “ but I have not seen her, — I cannot see her, — I hope I shall never see her more ! — ”

“ O fie ! fie ! ” said Cecilia, “ let me call her, I beg ; you should consult with her in this distress, and seek comfort from her affection.”

“ From her affection ? ” repeated he fiercely, “ from her hatred you mean ! Do you not know that she, too, is ruined ? Oh past redemption ruined ! — and yet that I should hesitate, that I should a moment hesitate, to conclude the whole business at once ! ”

“ How dreadful ! ” cried Cecilia, “ what horrible thing has happened ? ”

“ I have undone Priscilla ! ” cried he, “ I have blasted my credit ! I have destroyed — no, not yet quite destroyed myself ! ”

“ O yet nor ever ! ” cried Cecilia, whose agitation now almost equalled his own, “ be not so desperate, I conjure you ! speak to me more intelligibly, — what does all this mean ? How has it come to pass ? ”

“ My debts ! — my creditors ! — one way only,” striking his hand upon his forehead, “ is left for me ! ”

“ Do not say so, Sir ! ” said Cecilia, “ you shall

thousand pounds, perhaps,—and I have not, at this minute, forty guineas in the house!”

“Nay, then,” cried Cecilia, retreating, “I can indeed do nothing! if their demands are so high, I *ought* to do nothing.”

She would then have quitted him, not more shocked at his situation, than indignant at the wilful extravagance which had occasioned it.

“Stay, cried he, “and hear me!” then lowering his voice, “seek out,” he continued, “your unfortunate friend,—go to the poor ruined Priscilla,—prepare her for tidings of horror! and do not, though you renounce Me, do not abandon Her!”

Then fiercely passing her, he was himself leaving the room; but Cecilia, alarmed by the fury of his manner, called out, “What is it you mean? what tidings of horror? whither are you going?”

“To hell!” cried he, and rushed out of the apartment.

Cecilia screamed aloud, and conjuring him to hear her, ran after him; he paid her no regard, but, flying faster than she had power to pursue, reached his own dressing-room, shut himself into it with violence, and just as she arrived at the door, turned the key, and bolted it.

Her terror was now inexpressible; she believed him in the very act of suicide, and her refusal of assistance seemed the signal for the deed:

deed: her whole fortune, at that moment, was valueless and unimportant to her, compared with the preservation of a fellow-creature: she called out with all the vehemence of agony to beg he would open the door, and eagerly promised by all that was sacred to do every thing in her power to save him.

At these words he opened it; his face was totally without colour, and he grasped a razor in his hand.

“ You have stopt me,” said he, in a voice scarce audible, “ at the very moment I had gathered courage for the blow: but if indeed you will assist me, I will shut this up,—if not, I will steep it in my blood!”

“ I will! I will!” cried Cecilia, “ I will do every thing you desire!”

“ And quickly?”

“ Immediately.”

“ Before my disgrace is known? and while all may yet be hushed up?”

“ Yes, yes! all—any—every thing you wish!”

“ Swear then!”

Here Cecilia drew back; her recollection returned as her terror abated, and her repugnance to entering into an engagement for she know not what, with a man whose actions she condemned, and whose principles she abhorred, made all her fright now give way to indignation, and, after a short pause, she

angrily answered, "No, Sir, I will not swear!—but yet, all that is reasonable, all that is friendly——"

"Hear *me* swear, then!" interrupted, he, furiously, "which at this moment I do, by every thing eternal, and by every thing infernal, that I will not outlive the seizure of my property, and that the moment I am informed there is an execution in my house, shall be the last of my existence!"

"What cruelty! what compulsion! what impiety!" cried Cecilia: "give me, however, that horrible instrument, and prescribe, to me what conditions you please."

A noise was now heard below stairs, at which Cecilia, who had not dared call for help lest she should quicken his desperation, was secretly beginning to rejoice, when, starting at the sound, he exclaimed, "I believe you are too late!—the ruffians have already seized my house!" then endeavouring to force her out of the room, "Go," he cried, "to my wife;—I want to be alone!"

"Oh give me first," cried she, "that weapon, and I will take what oath you please!"

"No, no!—go,—leave me,—" cried he, almost breathless with emotion, "I must not now be trifled with."

"I do not trifle! indeed I do not!" cried Cecilia holding by his arm; "try, put me to the proof!"

"Swear,

“ Swear, solemnly swear, to empty my house of these creditors this moment ! ”

“ I *do* swear,” cried she, with energy, “ and Heaven prosper me as I am sincere ! ”

“ I see, I see you are an angel ! ” cried he, rapturously, “ and as such I worship and adore you ! O you have restored me to life, and rescued me from perdition ! ”

“ Give me, then, that fatal instrument ! ”

“ That instrument,” returned he, “ is nothing, since so many others are in my power ; but you have now taken from me all desire of using them. Go, then, and stop those wretches from coming to me—send immediately for the Jew !—he will advance what money you please,—my man knows where to find him ;—consult with Mr. Arnott,—speak a word of comfort to Priscilla,—but do nothing, nothing at all, till you have cleared my house of those cursed scoundrels ! ”

Cecilia, whose heart sunk within her at the solemn promise she had given, the mention of the Jew, and the arduous task she had undertaken, quitted him without reply, and was going to her own room, to compose her hurried spirits, and consider what steps she had to take, when hearing the noise in the hall grow louder, she stopt to listen, and catching some words that greatly alarmed her, went half way down stairs, when she was met by Davison, Mr. Harrel’s man, of

whom she enquired into the occasion of the disturbance.

He answered that he must go immediately to his master, for the bailiffs were coming into the house.

“ Let him not know it if you value his life ! ” cried she, with new terror. “ Where is Mr. Arnott ? call him to me—beg him to come this moment ;—I will wait for him here.”

The man flew to obey her : and Cecilia, finding she had time neither for deliberation nor regret, and dreading lest Mr. Harrel, by hearing of the arrival of the bailiffs, should relapse into despair, determined to call to her aid all the courage, prudence, and judgment she possessed, and since to act she was compelled, endeavour with her best ability, to save his credit, and retrieve his affairs.

The moment Mr. Arnott came, she ordered Davison to hasten to his master, and watch his motions.

Then, addressing Mr. Arnott, “ Will you, Sir,” she said, “ go and tell those people that if they will instantly quit the house, every thing shall be settled, and Mr. Harrel will satisfy their demands ? ”

“ Ah madam ! ” cried Mr. Arnott, mournfully, “ and how ? he has no means to pay them, and I have none—without ruin to myself,—to help him ! ”

“ Send them but away,” said Cecilia,
“ and

“and I will myself be your security that your promise shall not be disgraced.”

“Alas, madam,” cried he “what are you doing? well as I wish to Mr. Harrel, miserable as I am for my unfortunate sister, I yet cannot bear that such goodness, such beneficence should be injured!”

Cecilia, however, persisted, and with evident reluctance he obeyed her.

While she waited his return, Davison came from Mr. Harrel, who had ordered him to run instantly for the Jew.

Good Heaven, thought Cecilia, that a man so wretchedly selfish and worldly, should dare, with all his guilt upon his head,

To rush unlicenced on eternity! *

Mr. Arnott was more than half an hour with the people; and when, at last, he returned, his countenance immediately proclaimed the ill success of his errand. The creditors, he said, declared they had so frequently been deceived, that they would not dismiss the bailiffs, or retire themselves, without actual payment.

“Tell them, then, Sir,” said Cecilia, “to send me their accounts, and, if it be possible, I will discharge them directly.”

Mr. Arnott’s eyes were filled with tears at this declaration, and he protested, be the

* Mason’s Elfrida.

consequence to himself what it might, he would pay away every shilling he was worth, rather than witness such injustice.

“No,” cried Cecilia, exerting more spirit, that she might shock him less, “I did not save Mr. Harrel, to destroy so much better a man! you have suffered but too much oppression already; the present evil is mine; and from me, at least, none I hope will ever spread to Mr. Arnott.”

Mr. Arnott could not bear this; he was struck with grief, with admiration, and with gratitude, and finding his tears now refused to be restrained, he went to execute her commission in silent dejection.

The dejection, however, was increased, though his tears were dispersed, when he returned; “Oh madam!” he cried, “all your efforts, generous as they are, will be of no avail! the bills even now in the house amount to more than 7000*l.*!”

Cecilia, amazed and confounded, started and clasped her hands, calling out, “What must I do! to what have I bound myself! and how can I answer to my conscience,—to my successors, such a disposal, such an abuse of so large a part of my fortune!”

Mr. Arnott could make no answer; and they stood looking at each other in silent irresolution, till Davison brought intelligence that the Jew was already come, and waited to *spea*k with her.

“And

“ And what can I say to him ? ” cried she, more and more agitated ; “ I understand nothing of usury ; how am I to deal with him ? ”

Mr. Arnott then confessed that he should himself have instantly been bail for his brother, but that his fortune, originally not large, was now so much impaired by the many debts which from time to time he had paid for him, that as he hoped some day to have a family of his own, he dared not run a risk by which he might be utterly ruined, and the less, as his sister had at Violet Bank been prevailed upon to give up her settlement.

This account, which explained the late uneasiness of Mrs. Harrel, still encreased the distress of Cecilia ; and every moment she obtained for reflection, augmented her reluctance to parting with so large a sum of money for so worthless an object, and added strength to her resentment for the unjustifiable menaces which had extorted from her such a promise. Yet not an instant would she listen to Mr. Arnott’s offer of fulfilling her engagement, and charged him, as she considered her own self-esteem worth her keeping, not to urge to her a proposal so ungenerous and selfish.

Davison now came again to hasten her, and said that the Jew was with his master, and they both impatiently expected her.

Cecilia, half distracted with her uncertainty

tainty how to act, changed colour at this message, and exclaimed "Oh Mr. Arnott, run I beseech you for Mr. Monckton! bring him hither directly,—if any body can save me it is him; but if I go back to Mr. Harrel, I know it will be all over!"

"Certainly," said Mr. Arnott, "I will run to him this moment."

"Yet no!—stop!—" cried the trembling Cecilia, "he can now do me no good,—his counsel will arrive too late to serve me,—it cannot call back the oath I have given! it cannot, compulsory as it was, make me break it, and not be miserable for ever!"

This idea sufficed to determine her; and the apprehension of self-reproach, should the threat of Mr. Harrel be put in execution, was more insupportable to her blameless and upright mind, than any loss or diminution which her fortune could sustain.

Slowly however, with tardy and unwilling steps, her judgment repugnant, and her spirit repining, she obeyed the summons of Mr. Harrel, who, impatient of her delay, came forward to meet her.

"Miss Beverley," he cried, "there is not a moment to be lost; this good man will bring you any sum of money, upon a proper consideration, that you will command; but if he is not immediately commissioned, and these cursed fellows are not got out of my
house,

house, the affair will be blown, — and what will follow,” added he, lowering his voice, “ I will not again frighten you by repeating, though I shall never recant.”

Cecilia turned from him in horror; and, with a faltering voice and heavy heart, entreated Mr. Arnott to settle for her with the Jew.

Large as was the sum, she was so near being of age, and her security was so good, that the transaction was soon finished: 7500*l.* was received of the Jew, Mr. Harrel gave Cecilia his bond for the payment, the creditors were satisfied, the bailiffs were dismissed, and the house was soon restored to its customary appearance of splendid gaiety.

Mrs. Harrel, who during this scene had shut herself up in her own room to weep and lament, now flew to Cecilia, and in a transport of joy and gratitude, thanked her upon her knees for thus preserving her from utter ruin: the gentle Mr. Arnott seemed uncertain whether most to grieve or rejoice; and Mr. Harrel repeatedly protested she should have the sole guidance of his future conduct.

This promise, the hope of his amendment, and the joy she had expanded, somewhat revived the spirits of Cecilia; who, however, deeply affected by what had passed, hastened from them all to her own room.

She had now parted with 8050*l.* to Mr. Harrel, without any security when or how it

was

was to be paid; and that ardour of benevolence which taught her to value her riches merely as they enabled her to do good and generous actions, was here of no avail to console or reward her, for her gift was compelled, and its receiver was all but detested. "How much better," cried she, "would this have been bestowed upon the amiable Miss Belfield! or upon her noble-minded, though proud-spirited brother! and how much less a sum would have made the virtuous and industrious Hills easy and happy for life! but here, to become the tool of the extravagance I abhor! to be made responsible for the luxury I condemn! to be liberal in opposition to my principles, and lavish in defiance of my judgement!—Oh that my much-deceived uncle had better known to what dangerous hands he committed me! and that my weak and unhappy friend had met with a worthier protector of her virtue and safety!"

As soon, however, as she recovered from the first shock of her reflections, she turned her thoughts from herself to the formation of some plan that might, at least, render her donation of serious and lasting use. The signal service she had just done them gave her at present an ascendancy over the Harrels, which she hoped, if immediately exerted, might prevent the return of so calamitous a scene, by engaging them both to
an

an immediate change of conduct. But unequal herself to contriving expedients for this purpose that might not easily be controverted, she determined to send the next morning a petition to Mr. Monckton to call upon her, reveal to him the whole transaction, and entreat him to suggest to her what, with most probability of success, she might offer to their consideration.

While this was passing in her mind, on the evening of the day in which she had so dearly purchased the right of giving counsel, she was summoned to tea.

She found Mr. Harrel and his lady engaged in earnest discourse: as soon as she appeared, the former said, "My dear Miss Beverley, after the extraordinary kindness you have shewn me this morning, you will not, I am sure, deny me one trifling favour which I mean to ask this evening."

"No," said Mrs. Harrel, "that I am sure she will not, when she knows that our future appearance in the world depends upon her granting it."

"I hope then," said Cecilia, "I shall not wish to refuse it."

"It is nothing in the world," said Mr. Harrel, "but to go with us to-night to the Pantheon."

Cecilia was struck with the utmost indignation at this proposal; that the man **who** in the morning had an execution in his house

house, should languish in the evening for the amusement of a public place,—that he who but a few hours before was plunging uncalled into eternity, should, while the intended instrument of death was yet scarce cold from the grasp of his hand, deliberately court a return of his distress, by instantly recurring to the methods which had involved him in it, irritated and shocked her beyond even a wish of disguising her displeasure, and therefore, after an expressive silence, she gave a cold, but absolute denial.

“ I see,” said Mr. Harrel, somewhat confused, “ you do not understand the motives of our request. The unfortunate affair of this morning is very likely to spread presently all over the town; the only refutation that can be given to it, is by our all appearing in public before any body knows whether to believe it or not.”

“ Do, my dearest friend,” cried his lady, “ oblige me by your compliance; indeed our whole reputation depends upon it. I made an engagement yesterday to go with Mrs. Mears, and if I disappoint her, every body will be guessing the reason.”

“ At least,” answered Cecilia, “ *my* going can answer no purpose to you: pray, therefore, do not ask me; I am ill disposed for such sort of amusement, and have by no means your opinion of its necessity.”

“ But if we do not *all* go,” said Mr. Harrel,

rel, " we do almost nothing: you are known to live with us, and your appearance at this critical time is important to our credit. If this misfortune gets wind, the consequence is that every dirty tradesman in town to whom I owe a shilling, will be forming the same cursed combination those scoundrels formed this morning, of coming in a body, and waiting for their money, or else bringing an execution into my house. The only way to silence report is by putting a good face upon the matter at once, and shewing ourselves to the world as if nothing had happened. Favour us, therefore, to-night with your company, which is really important to us, or ten to one, but in another fortnight, I shall be just in the same scrape."

Cecilia, however incensed at this intelligence that his debts were still so numerous, felt now as much alarmed at the mention of an execution, as if she was in actual danger of ruin herself. Terrified, therefore, though not convinced, she yielded to their persuasions, and consented to accompany them.

They soon after separated to make some alteration in their dress, and then, calling in their way for Mrs. Mears, they proceeded to the Pantheon.

C H A P. II.

A MAN OF THE TON.

AT the door of the Pantheon they were joined by Mr. Arnott and Sir Robert Floyer, whom Cecilia now saw with added aversion: they entered the great room during the second act of the Concert, to which, as no one of the party but herself had any desire to listen, no sort of attention was paid; the ladies entertaining themselves as if no Orchestra was in the room, and the gentlemen, with an equal disregard to it, struggling for a place by the fire, about which they continued hovering till the music was over.

Soon after they were seated, Mr. Meadows, sauntering towards them, whispered something to Mrs. Mears, who, immediately rising, introduced him to Cecilia; after which, the place next to her being vacant, he cast himself upon it, and lolling as much at his ease as his situation would permit, began something like a conversation with her.

“Have you been long in town, ma’am?”

“No, Sir.”

“This is not your first winter?”

“Of being in town, it is.”

“Then you have something new to see:

O charm-

O charming! how I envy you!—Are you pleased with the Pantheon?”

“Very much; I have seen no building at all equal to it.”

“You have not been abroad. Travelling is the ruin of all happiness! There’s no looking at a building here after seeing Italy.”

“Does all happiness, then, depend upon sight of buildings?” said Cecilia, when, turning towards her companion, she perceived him yawning with such evident inattention to her answer, that not chusing to interrupt his reverie, she turned her head another way.

For some minutes he took no notice of this; and then, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he called out hastily “I beg your pardon, ma’am, you were saying something?”

“No, Sir, nothing worth repeating.”

“O pray don’t punish me so severely as not to let me hear it!”

Cecilia, though merely not to seem offended at his negligence, was then again beginning an answer, when looking at him as she spoke, she perceived that he was biting his nails with so absent an air, that he appeared not to know he had asked any question. She therefore broke off, and left him to his cogitation.

Some time after he addressed her again, saying, “Don’t you find this place extremely tiresome, ma’am?”

“ Yes, Sir,” said she, half laughing, “ it is, indeed, not very entertaining ! ”

“ Nothing is entertaining,” answered he, “ for two minutes together. Things are so little different one from another, that there is no making pleasure out of any thing. We go the same dull round for ever ; nothing new, no variety ! all the same thing over again ! Are you fond of public places, ma’am ? ”

“ Yes, Sir, *soberly*, as Lady Grace says.”

“ Then I envy you extremely, for you have some amusement always in your own power. How desirable that is ! ”

“ And have not you the same resources ? ”

“ O no ! I am tired to death ! tired of every thing ! I would give the universe for a disposition less difficult to please. Yet, after all, what is there to give pleasure ? When one has seen one thing, one has seen every thing. O, ’tis heavy work ! Don’t you find it so, ma’am ? ”

This speech was ended with so violent a fit of yawning, that Cecilia would not trouble herself to answer it : but her silence, as before, passed wholly unnoticed, exciting neither question nor comment.

A long pause now succeeded, which he broke at last, by saying, as he writhed himself about upon his seat, “ These forms would be much more agreeable if there were backs to them. ’Tis intolerable to be forced to sit
like

like a school-boy. The first study of life is ease. There is, indeed, no other study that pays the trouble of attainment. Don't you think so, ma'am?"

"But may not even that," said Cecilia, "by so much study, become labour?"

"I am vastly happy you think so."

"Sir?"

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I thought you said—I really beg your pardon, but I was thinking of something else."

"You did very right, Sir," said Cecilia, laughing, "for what I said by no means merited any attention."

"Will you do me the favour to repeat it?" cried he, taking out his glass to examine some lady at a distance.

"O no," said Cecilia, "that would be trying your patience too severely."

"These glasses shew one nothing but defects," said he; "I am sorry they were ever invented. They are the ruin of all beauty; no complexion can stand them. I believe that solo will never be over! I hate a solo; it sinks, it depresses me intolerably."

"You will presently, Sir," said Cecilia, looking at the bill of the concert, "have a full piece; and that, I hope, will revive you."

"A full piece! oh insupportable! it stuns, it fatigues, it overpowers me beyond endurance! no taste in it, no delicacy, no room for the smallest feeling."

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“ Perhaps, then, you are only fond of singing ? ”

“ I should be, if I could hear it ; but we are now so miserably off in voices, that I hardly ever attempt to listen to a song, without fancying myself deaf from the feebleness of the performers. I hate every thing that requires attention. Nothing gives pleasure that does not force its own way.”

“ You only, then, like loud voices, and great powers ? ”

“ O worse and worse ! — no, nothing is so disgusting to me. All my amazement is that these people think it worth while to give Concerts at all ; one is sick to death of music.”

“ Nay,” cried Cecilia, “ if it gives no pleasure, at least it takes none away ; for, far from being any impediment to conversation, I think every body talks more during the performance than between the acts. And what is there better you could substitute in its place ? ”

Cecilia, receiving no answer to this question, again looked round to see if she had been heard ; when she observed her new acquaintance, with a very thoughtful air, had turned from her to fix his eyes upon the statue of Britannia.

Very soon after, he hastily arose, and seeming entirely to forget that he had spoken to her, very abruptly walked away.

Mr.

Mr. Gosport, who was advancing to Cecilia, and had watched part of this scene, stopt him as she was retreating, and said “ Why Meadows, how’s this? are you caught at last? ”

“ O worn to death! worn to a thread! ” cried he, stretching himself and yawning; “ I have been talking with a young lady to entertain her! O such heavy work! I would not go through it again for millions! ”

“ What, have you talked yourself out of breath? ”

“ No; but the effort! the effort!—O, it has unhinged me for a fortnight!—Entertaining a young lady!—one had better be a galley-slave at once! ”

“ Well but, did she not pay your toils? She is surely a sweet creature.”

“ Nothing can pay one for such insufferable exertion! though she’s well enough, too,—better than the common run,—but shy, quite too shy; no drawing her out.”

“ I thought that was to your taste. You commonly hate much volubility. How have I heard you bemoan yourself when attacked by Miss Larolles! ”

“ Larolles? O distraction! She talks me into a fever in two minutes. But so it is for ever! nothing but extremes to be met with! common girls are too forward, this lady is too reserved—always some fault! always some drawback! nothing ever perfect!

should he offer it again, to accept it: but the same brutality which forced this intention, contributed to render it repugnant to her, and she resolved if possible to avoid him, by hurrying down stairs before he reached her. She made, therefore, a sudden attempt to slip through the crowd, and as she was light and active, she easily succeeded; but though her hasty motion separated her from the rest of her party, Delvile, who was earnestly looking at her, to discover her meaning in the disclaiming speech she made about Sir Robert, saw into her design, but suffered her not to go alone; he contrived in a moment to follow and join her, while she was stopping at the foot of the stairs for Mrs. Harrel.

“Why what a little thief you are,” cried he, “to run away from us thus! what do you think Sir Robert will say? I saw him looking for you at the very instant of your flight.”

“Then you saw at the same time,” said Cecilia, “the reason of it.”

“Will you give me leave,” cried he, laughing, “to repeat this to my Lord Ernolf?”

“You may repeat it, Sir, if you please,” said Cecilia, piqued that he had not rather thought of himself than of Lord Ernolf, “to the whole Pantheon.”

“And if I should,” cried he, “half of it, at least, would thank me; and to obtain the
applause

applause of so noble an assembly, what would it signify that Sir Robert should cut my throat?"

"I believe," said Cecilia, deeply mortified by a raillery that shewed so little interest in her avowal of indifference, "you are determined to make me as sick of that man's name, as I am of his conversation."

"And is it possible," exclaimed Delvile, in a tone of surprize, "that such can be your opinion, and yet, situated as you are, the whole world at your command, and all mankind at your devotion — but I am answering you seriously, when you are only speaking by rule."

"What rule, Sir?"

"That which young ladies, upon certain occasions, always prescribe themselves."

Here they were interrupted by the arrival of the rest of the company; though not before Cecilia had received some little consolation for her displeasure, by finding that young Delvile still supposed she was engaged, and flattering herself his language would be different were he informed of the contrary.

Morrice now undertook to procure them a table for tea, which, as the room was very full, was not easily done; and while they were waiting his success, Miss Larolles, who from the stairs had perceived Cecilia, came running up to her, and taking her hand, called out, "Lord, my dear creature, who'd
have

have thought of seeing you here? I was never so surpris'd in my life! I really thought you was gone into a convent, it's so extreme long since I've seen you. But of all things in the world, why was you not at Lady Nyland's last assembly? I thought of asking Mrs. Harrel fifty times why you did not come, but it always went out of my head. You've no notion how excessively I was disappointed."

"You are very obliging," said Cecilia, laughing, "but I hope, since you so often forgot it, the disappointment did not much lessen your entertainment."

"O Lord no! I was never so happy in my life. There was such a crowd, you could not move a finger. Every body in the world was there. You've no idea how delightful it was. I thought verily I should have fainted with the heat."

"That was delightful indeed! And how long did you stay?"

"Why we danced till three in the morning. We began with Cotillons, and finished with country dances. It was the most elegant thing you ever saw in your life; every thing quite in a stile. I was so monstrously fatigued, I could hardly get through the last dance. I really thought I should have dropt down dead. Only conceive dancing five hours in such a monstrous crowd! I assure you when I got home my feet were all blisters. *You have no idea how they smarted.*"

"And

“ And whence comes it,” cried young Delvile, “ that *you* partake so little of these delights ? ”

“ Because I fear,” answered Cecilia, “ I came too late into the school of fashion to be a ductile pupil.”

“ Do you know,” continued Miss Larrolles, “ Mr. Meadows has not spoke one word to me all the evening ! though I am sure he saw me, for I sat at the outside on purpose to speak to a person or two, that I knew would be strolling about ; for if one sits on the inside, there’s no speaking to a creature you know ; so I never do it at the Opera, nor in the boxes at Ranelagh, nor any where. It’s the shockingest thing you can conceive to be made sit in the middle of those forms ; one might as well be at home, for nobody can speak to one.”

“ But you don’t seem to have had much better success,” said Cecilia, “ in keeping at the outside.”

“ O yes I have, for I got a little chat with two or three people as they were passing, for, you know, when one sits there, they can’t help saying something ; though I assure you all the men are so excessively odd they don’t care whether they speak to one or no. As to Mr. Meadows, he’s really enough to provoke one to death. I suppose he’s in one of his absent fits. However, I assure you, I think it’s extreme impertinent of him, and

so I shall tell Mr. Sawyer, for I know he'll make a point of telling him of it again."

"I rather think," said Cecilia, "the best would be to return the compliment in kind, and when he next recollects you, appear to have forgotten him."

"O Lord, that's a very good notion! so I will, I declare. But you can't conceive how glad I am the Concert's over; for I assure you, though I sat as near the fire as possible, I was so extreme cold you've no idea, for Mr. Meadows never would let me have the least peep at it. I declare I believe he does it on purpose to plague one, for he grows worse and worse every day. You can't think how I hate him!"

"Not easily I believe indeed!" said Cecilia, archly.

"O do but look!" resumed the fair VOLUBLE, "if there is not Mrs. Mears in her old red gown again! I begin to think she'll never have another. I wish she was to have an execution in her house, if it was only to get rid of it! I am so fatigued with the sight of it you can't conceive."

Mr. Morrice now brought intelligence that he had secured one side of a table which would very well accommodate the ladies; and that the other side was only occupied by one gentleman, who, as he was not drinking tea himself, would doubtless give up his place when the party appeared.

Miss

Miss Larolles then ran back to her own set, and the rest followed Mr. Morrice; Mrs. Harrel, Mrs. Mears and Cecilia took their places. The gentleman opposite to them proved to be Mr. Meadows: Morrice, therefore, was much deceived in his expectations, for, far from giving up his place, he had flung himself all along upon the form in such a lounging posture, while he rested one arm upon the table, that, not contented with merely keeping his own seat, he filled up a space meant for three.

Mr. Harrel had already walked off to another party: Delvile stood aloof for some minutes, expecting Sir Robert Floyer would station himself behind Cecilia; but Sir Robert, who would scarce have thought such a condescension due to a princess, disdained any appearance of assiduity, even while he made it his care to publish his pretensions; and therefore, finding no accommodation to please him, he stalked towards some gentlemen in another part of the room. Delvile then took the post he had neglected, and Mr. Arnott, who had not had courage to make any effort in his own favour, modestly stood near him. Cecilia contrived to make room for Mr. Gosport next to herself, and Morrice was sufficiently happy in being allowed to call the waiters, superintend the provisions, and serve the whole party.

The task of making tea fell upon Cecilia,
who

who being somewhat incommoded by the vicinity of her neighbours, Mrs. Mears called out to Mr. Meadows, "Do pray, Sir, be so good as to make room for one of us at your side."

Mr. Meadows, who was indolently picking his teeth, and examining them with a tooth pick case glass, did not, at first, seem to hear her; and when she repeated her request, he only looked at her, and said "umph?"

"Now really, Mr. Meadows," said she, "when you see any ladies in such distress, I wonder how you can forbear helping them."

"In distress, are you?" cried he, with a vacant smile, "pray what's the matter?"

"Don't you see? we are so crowded we can hardly sit."

"Can't you?" cried he, "upon my honour it's very shameful that these people don't contrive some seats more convenient."

"Yes," said Mrs. Mears; "but if you would be so kind as to let somebody else sit by you we should not want any contrivance."

Here Mr. Meadows was seized with a furious fit of yawning, which as much diverted Cecilia and Mr. Gosport, as it offended Mrs. Mears, who with great displeasure added, "Indeed, Mr. Meadows, it's very strange that you never hear what's said to you."

"I beg your pardon," said he, "were
you

you speaking to me?" and again began picking his teeth.

Morrice, eager to contrast his civility with the inattention of Mr. Meadows, now flew round to the other side of the table, and calling out "let *me* help you, Miss Beverley, I can make tea better than any body," he leant over that part of the form which Mr. Meadows had occupied with one of his feet, in order to pour it out himself: but Mr. Meadows, by an unfortunate removal of his foot, bringing him forwarder than he was prepared to go, the tea-pot and its contents were overturned immediately opposite to Cecilia.

Young Delvile, who saw the impending evil, from an impetuous impulse to prevent her suffering by it, hastily drew her back, and bending down before her, secured her preservation by receiving himself the mischief with which she was threatened.

Mrs. Mears and Mrs. Harrel vacated their seats in a moment, and Mr. Gosport and Mr. Arnott assisted in clearing the table, and removing Cecilia, who was very slightly hurt, and at once surpris'd, ashamed and pleas'd at the manner in which she had been sav'd.

Young Delvile, though a sufferer from his gallantry, the hot water having penetrated through his coat to his arm and shoulder, was at first insensible to his situation, from an apprehension that Cecilia had not
wholly

wholly escaped; and his enquiries were so eager and so anxious, made with a look of such solicitude, and a voice of such alarm, that, equally astonished and gratified, she secretly blest the accident which had given birth to his uneasiness, however she grieved for its consequence to himself.

But no sooner was he satisfied of her safety, than he felt himself obliged to retire; yet attributing to inconvenience what was really the effect of pain, he hurried away with an appearance of sport, saying, "There is something, I must own, rather *unknightly* in quitting the field for a wet jacket, but the company, I hope, will only give me credit for flying away to Ranelagh. So

" Like a brave general after being beat,
I'll exult and rejoice in a prudent retreat."*

He then hastened to his carriage: and poor Morrice, frightened and confounded at the disaster he had occasioned, sneaked after him with much less ceremony. While Mr. Meadows, wholly unconcerned by the distress and confusion around him, sat quietly picking his teeth, and looking on during the whole transaction, with an unmeaning stare, that made it doubtful whether he had even perceived it.

* Smart.

Order being now soon restored, the ladies finished their tea, and went up stairs. Cecilia, to whom the late accident had afforded much new and interesting matter for reflection, wished immediately to have returned home, but she was not the leader of the party, and therefore could not make the proposal.

They then strolled through all the apartments, and having walked about till the fashionable time of retiring, they were joined by Sir Robert Floyer, and proceeded to the little room near the entrance to the great one, in order to wait for their carriages.

Here Cecilia again met Miss Larolles, who came to make various remarks, and infinite ridicule, upon sundry unfashionable or uncostly articles in the dresses of the surrounding company; as well as to complain, with no little resentment, that Mr. Meadows was again standing before the fire!

Captain Aresby also advanced to tell her he was quite *abattu* by having so long lost sight of her, to hope she *would make a renouance* of mortifying the world by discarding it, and to protest he had waited for his carriage till he was actually upon the point of being *accablé*.

In the midst of this *jargon*, to which the fulness of Cecilia's mind hardly permitted her to listen, there suddenly appeared at the door of the apartment, Mr. Albany, who,
with

with his usual austerity of countenance, stooped to look round upon the company.

“Do you see,” cried Mr. Gosport to Cecilia, “who approaches? your poor *sycophants* will again be taken to task, and I, for one, tremble at the coming storm!”

“O Lord,” cried Miss Larolles, “I wish I was safe in my chair! that man always frightens me out of my senses. You’ve no notion what disagreeable things he says to one. I assure you I’ve no doubt but he’s crazy: and I am always in the shockingest fright in the world for fear he should be taken with a fit while I’m near him.”

“It is really a petrifying thing,” said the Captain, “that one can go to no *spectacle* without the *borreur* of being *obsédé* by that person! if he comes this way, I shall certainly make a renounce, and retire.”

“Why so?” said Sir Robert, “what the d—l do you mind him for?”

“O he is the greatest bore in nature!” cried the Captain, “and I always do *mon possible* to avoid him; for he breaks out into such barbarous phrases, that I find myself *degouté* with him in a moment.”

“O, I assure you,” said Miss Larolles, “he attacks one sometimes in a manner you’ve no idea. One day he came up to me all of a sudden, and asked me what good I thought I did by dressing so much? Only conceive how shocking!”

“O,

“ O, I have had the *borreur* of questions of that sort from him *sans fin*,” said the Captain. “ Once he took the liberty to ask me, what service I was of to the world? and another time, he desired me to inform him whether I had ever made any poor person pray for me? And, in short, he has so frequently inconvenienced me by his impertinencies, that he really bores me to a degree.”

“ That’s just the thing that makes him hunt you down,” said Sir Robert; “ if he were to ask me questions for a month together, I should never trouble myself to move a muscle.”

“ The matter of his discourse,” said Mr. Gosport, “ is not more singular than the manner; for without any seeming effort or consciousness, he runs into blank verse perpetually. I have made much enquiry about him, but all I am able to learn, is, that he was certainly confined, at one part of his life, in a private mad-house: and though now, from not being mischievous, he is set at liberty, his looks, language, and whole behaviour, announce the former injury of his intellects.”

“ O Lord,” cried Miss Larolles, half screaming, “ what shocking notions you put in one’s head! I declare I dare say I sha’n’t get safe home for him, for I assure you I believe he has taken a spite to me! and all because one day, before I knew of his odd

ways, I happened to fall a laughing at his going about in that old coat. Do you know it put him quite in a passion! only conceive how ill-natured!”

“O he has distressed me,” exclaimed the Captain, with a shrug, “*partout!* and found so much fault with every thing I have done, that I should really be glad to have the honour to cut; for the moment he comes up to me, I know what I have to expect!”

“But I must tell you,” cried Miss Larolles, “how monstrously he put me in a fright one evening when I was talking with Miss Moffat. Do you know, he came up to us, and asked what we were saying! and because we could not think in a minute of something to answer him, he said he supposed we were only talking some scandal, and so we had better go home, and employ ourselves in working for the poor! only think how horrid! and after that, he was so excessive impertinent in his remarks, there was quite no bearing him. I assure you he cut me up so you’ve no notion.”

Here Mr. Albany advanced; and every body but Sir Robert moved out of the way.

Fixing his eyes upon Cecilia, with an expression *more in sorrow than in anger*, after contemplating her some time in silence, he exclaimed, “Ah lovely, but perishable flower! how long will that ingenuous countenance, wearing, because wanting no disguise,

guise, look responsive of the whiteness of the region within? How long will that air of innocence irradiate your whole appearance? unspoilt by prosperity, unperverted by power! pure in the midst of surrounding depravity! unfulled in the tainted air of infectious perdition!"

The confusion of Cecilia at this public address, which drew upon her the eyes and attention of all the company, was inexpressible; she arose from her seat, covered with blushes, and saying, "I fancy the carriage must be ready," pressed forward to quit the room, followed by Sir Robert, who answered, "No, no, they'll call it when it comes up. Arnott, will you go and see where it is?"

Cecilia stopt, but whispered Mrs. Harrel to stand near her.

"And whither," cried Albany indignantly, "whither wouldst thou go? Art thou already disdainful of my precepts? and canst thou not one short moment spare from the tumultuous folly which encircles thee? Many and many are the hours thou mayst spend with such as these; the world, alas! is full of them; weary not then, so soon, of an old man that would admonish thee,—he cannot call upon thee long, for soon he will called upon himself."

This solemn exhortation extremely distressed her; and fearing to still further of-

cult, Albany, following and stopping her, said, "What is it you fear? a miserable old man, worn out by the sorrows of that experience from which he offers you counsel? What, too, is it you trust? a libertine wretch, coveting nothing but your wealth, for the gift of which he will repay you by the perversion of your principles!"

"What the d—l do you mean by that?" cried the Baronet.

"To shew," answered he, austere, "the inconsistency of false delicacy; to shew how those who are too timid for truth, can fearless meet licentiousness."

"For Heaven's sake, Sir," cried Cecilia, "say no more to me now! Call upon me in Portman-square when you please,—reprove me in whatever you think me blameable, I shall be grateful for your instructions, and bettered, perhaps, by your care;—but lessons and notice thus public can do me nothing but injury."

"How happy," cried he, "were no other injury near thee! Spotless were then the hour of thy danger; bright, fair and refulgent thy passage to security! the Good would receive thee with praise, the Guilty would supplicate thy prayers, the Poor would follow thee with blessings, and Children would be taught by thy example!"

He then quitted her, every body making way as he moved, and proceeded into the

great room. Mrs. Harrel's carriage being also announced at the same time, Cecilia lost not at an instant in hastening away.

Sir Robert, as he conducted her, disdainfully laughed at the adventure, which the general licence allowed to Mr. Albany prevented his resenting, and which therefore he scorned to appear moved at.

Mrs. Harrel could talk of nothing else, neither was Cecilia disposed to change the subject, for the remains of insanity which seemed to hang upon him were affecting without being alarming, and her desire to know more of him grew every instant stronger.

This desire, however, outlived not the conversation to which it gave rise; when she returned to her own room, no vestige of it remained upon her mind, which a nearer concern and deeper interest wholly occupied.

The behaviour of young Delvile had pained, pleased, and disturbed her. His activity to save her from mischief might proceed merely from gallantry or good nature; upon that, therefore, she dwelt little: but his eagerness, his anxiety, his insensibility to himself, were more than good breeding could claim, and seemed to spring from a motive less artificial.

She now, therefore, believed that her partiality was returned; and this belief had power to shake all her resolves, and enfeeble
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all her objections. The arrogance of Mr. Delvile lessened in her reflections, the admonitions of Mr. Monckton abated in their influence. With the first she considered that though connected she need not live; and for the second, though she acknowledged the excellence of his judgment, she concluded him wholly ignorant of her sentiments of Delvile; which she imagined, when once revealed, would make every obstacle to the alliance seem trifling, when put in competition with mutual esteem and affection.

C H A P. III.

A R E P R O O F.

THE attention of Cecilia to her own affairs, did not make her forgetful of those of the Harrels: and the morning after the busy day which was last recorded, as soon as she quitted the breakfast-room, she began a note to Mr. Monckton, but was interrupted with information that he was already in the house.

She went to him immediately, and had the satisfaction of finding him alone; but de-

firous as she was to relate to him the transactions of the preceding day, there was in his countenance a gravity so unusual, that her impatience was involuntarily checked, and she waited first to hear if he had himself any thing to communicate.

He kept her not long in suspense; "Miss Beverley," he said, "I bring you intelligence which though I know you will be very sorry to hear, it is absolutely necessary should be told you immediately: you may otherwise, from however laudable motives, be drawn into some action which you may repent for life."

"What now!" cried Cecilia, much alarmed.

"All that I suspected," said he, "and more than I hinted to you, is true; Mr. Harrel is a ruined man! he is not worth a groat, and he is in debt beyond what he ever possessed."

Cecilia made no answer: she knew but too fatally the desperate state of his affairs, yet that *his debts were more than he had ever possessed*, she had not thought possible.

"My enquiries," continued he, "have been among principals, and such as would not dare deceive me. I hastened, therefore, to you, that this timely notice might enforce the injunctions I gave you when I had the pleasure of seeing you last, and prevent a misjudging generosity from leading you into
any

any injury of your own fortune, for a man who is past all relief from it, and who cannot be saved, even though you were to be destroyed for his sake."

"You are very good," said Cecilia, "but your counsel is now too late!" She then briefly acquainted him with what passed, and with how large a sum she had parted.

He heard her with rage, amazement, and horror, and after inveighing against Mr. Harrel in the bitterest terms, he said, "But why, before you signed your name to so base an imposition, could you not send for me?"

"I wished, I meant to have done it," cried she, "but I thought the time past when you could help me. How, indeed, could you have saved me? my word was given, given with an oath the most solemn, and the first I have ever taken in my life."

"An oath so forced," answered he, "the most delicate conscience would have absolved you from performing. You have, indeed, been grossly imposed upon; and pardon me if I add, unaccountably to blame. Was it not obvious that relief so circumstanced must be temporary? If his ruin had been any thing less than certain, what tradesman would have been so insolent? You have therefore deprived yourself of the power of doing good to a worthier object, merely to grant a longer date to extravagance and villainy."

“Yet how,” cried Cecilia, deeply touched by this reproof, “how could I do otherwise? Could I see a man in the agonies of despair, hear him first darkly hint his own destruction, and afterwards behold him almost in the very act of suicide, the instrument of self-murder in his desperate hand — and yet, though he put his life in my power, though he told me I could preserve him, and told me he had no other reliance or resource, could I leave him to his dreadful despondence, refuse my assisting hand to raise him from perdition, and, to save what, after all, I am well able to spare, suffer a fellow-creature, who flung himself upon my mercy, to offer up his last accounts with an action blacker than any which had preceded it? — No, I cannot repent what I have done, though I lament, indeed, that the object was not more deserving.”

“Your representation,” said Mr. Monckton, “like every thing else that I ever heard you utter, breathes nothing but benevolence and goodness: but your pity has been abused, and your understanding imposed upon. Mr. Harrel had no intention to destroy himself; the whole was an infamous trick, which, had not your generosity been too well known, would never have been played.”

“I cannot think quite so ill of him,” said Cecilia, “nor for the world would I have

have risked my own future reproaches by trusting to such a suspicion, which, had it proved wrong, and had Mr. Harrel, upon my refusal, committed the fatal deed, would have made his murder upon my own conscience rest for ever! Surely the experiment would have been too hazardous, when the consequence had all my future peace in its power."

"It is impossible not to revere your scruples," said Mr. Monckton, "even while I consider them as causeless; for causeless they undoubtedly were: the man who could act so atrocious a part, who could so scandalously pillage a young lady who was his guest and his ward, take advantage of her temper for the plunder of her fortune, and extort her compliance by the basest and most dishonourable arts, meant only to terrify her into a compliance; for he can be nothing less than a downright and thorough scoundrel, capable of every species of mean villainy."

He then protested he would at least acquaint her other guardians with what had passed, whose business it would be to enquire if there was any chance of redress.

Cecilia, however, had not much trouble in combating this proposal; for though her objections, which were merely those of punctilious honour and delicacy, weighed nothing with a man who regarded them as absurdities, yet his own apprehensions of ap-

pearing too officious in her affairs, forced him, after a little deliberation, to give up the design.

“ Besides,” said Cecilia, “ as I have his bond for what I have parted with, I have, at least, no right to complain, unless, after he receives his rents, he refuses to pay me.”

“ His bonds! his rents!” exclaimed Mr. Monckton; what is a man’s bond who is not worth a guinea? and what are his rents, when all he ever owned must be sold before they are due, and when he will not himself receive a penny from the sale, as he has neither land, house, nor possession of any sort that is not mortgaged?”

“ Nay, then,” said Cecilia, “ if so, it is indeed all over! I am sorry, I am grieved! — but it is past, and nothing, therefore, remains, but that I try to forget I ever was richer!”

“ This is very youthful philosophy,” said Mr. Monckton; “ but it will not lessen your regret hereafter, when the value of money is better known to you.”

“ If I shall dearly buy my experience,” said Cecilia, “ let me be the more attentive to making good use of it; and, since my loss seems irremediable to myself, let me at least endeavour to secure its utility to Mr. Harrel.”

She then told him her wish to propose to that gentleman some scheme of reformation.
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while yesterday's events were yet recent in his mind: but Mr. Monckton, who had hardly patience to hear her, exclaimed, "He is a wretch, and deserves the full force of the disgrace he is courting. What is now most necessary is to guard you from his further machinations, for you may else be involved in ruin as deep as his own. He now knows the way to frighten you, and he will not fail to put it in practice."

"No, Sir," answered Cecilia; "he would vainly apply to me in future: I cannot repent that I ventured not yesterday to brave his menaces; but too little is the comfort I feel from what I have bestowed, to suffer any consideration to make me part with more."

"Your resolution," answered he, "will be as feeble as your generosity will be potent: depend nothing upon yourself, but instantly quit his house. You will else be made responsible for every debt that he contracts; and whatever may be his difficulties hereafter, he will know that to extricate himself from them, he has but to talk of dying, and to shew you a sword or a pistol."

"If so, then," said Cecilia, looking down while she spoke, "I suppose I must again go to Mr. Delvile's."

This was by no means the purpose of Mr. Monckton, who saw not more danger to her fortune with one of her guardians, than to her person with the other. He ventured,
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therefore, to recommend to her a residence with Mr. Briggs, well knowing that his house would be a security against her seeing any man equal to himself, and hoping that under his roof he might again be as unrivalled in her opinion and esteem, as he formerly was in the country.

But here the opposition of Cecilia was too earnest for any hope that it might be surmounted; for, added to her dislike of Mr. Briggs, her repugnance to such an habitation was strongly, though silently increased, by her secret inclination to return to St. James's Square.

“ I mention not Mr. Briggs as an eligible host,” said Mr. Monckton, after listening to her objections, “ but merely as one more proper for you than Mr. Delvile, with whom your fixing at present would be but ill thought of in the world.”

“ Ill thought of, Sir! Why so?”

“ Because he has a son; for whose sake alone it would be universally concluded you changed your abode: and to give any pretence for such a report, would by no means accord with the usual delicacy of your conduct.”

Cecilia was confounded by this speech: the truth of the charge she felt, and the probability of the censure she did not dare dispute.

He then gave her a thousand exhortations
to

to beware of the schemes and artifices of Mr. Harrel, which he foresaw would be innumerable. He told her, too, that with respect to Sir Robert Floyer, he thought she had better suffer the report to subside of itself, which in time it must necessarily do, than give to it so much consequence as to send a message to the Baronet, from which he might pretend to infer that hitherto she had been wavering, or she would have sent to him sooner.

But the real motive of this advice was, that as he found Sir Robert by no means to be dreaded, he hoped the report, if generally circulated and credited, might keep off other pretenders, and intimidate or deceive young Delvile.

The purport for which Cecilia had wished this conference was, however, wholly unanswered. Mr. Monckton, enraged by the conduct of Mr. Harrel, refused to talk of his affairs, and could only mention him with detestation: but Cecilia, less severe in her judgment, and more tender in her heart, would not yet give up the hope of an amendment she so anxiously wished; and having now no other person to whom she could apply, determined to consult with Mr. Arnott, whose affection for his sister would give him a zeal in the affair that might somewhat supply the place of superior abilities.

There was, indeed, no time to be lost in
making

making the projected attempt ; for no sooner was the immediate danger of suffering removed, than the alarm wore away, and the penitence was forgotten ; every thing went on as usual, no new regulations were made, no expences abated, no pleasures forborn, not a thought of hereafter admitted : and ruinous and terrible as had been the preceding storm, no trace of it was visible in the serenity of the present calm.

An occasion of discussion with Mr. Arnott very speedily offered. Mr. Harrel said he had observed in the looks of his friends at the Pantheon much surprise at the sight of him, and declared he should take yet another measure for removing all suspicion. This was to give a splendid entertainment at his own house to all his acquaintance, to which he meant to invite every body of any consequence he had ever seen, and almost every body he had ever heard of, in his life.

Levity so unfeeling, and a spirit of extravagance so irreclaimable, were hopeless prognostics ; yet Cecilia would not desist from her design. She therefore took the earliest opportunity of speaking with Mr. Arnott upon the subject, when she openly expressed her uneasiness at the state of his brother's affairs, and warmly acknowledged her displeasure at his dissipated way of life.

Mr. Arnott soon shewed that example was all he wanted to declare the same sentiments.

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He owned he had long disapproved the conduct of Mr. Harrel, and trembled at the situation of his sister. They then considered what it was possible to propose that might retrieve their affairs, and concluded that entirely to quit London for some years, was the only chance that remained of saving them from absolute destruction.

Mr. Arnott, therefore, though fearfully, and averse to the task, told his sister their mutual advice. She thanked him, said she was much obliged to him, and would certainly consider his proposal, and mention it to Mr. Harrel.—Parties of pleasure, however, intervened, and the promise was neglected.

Cecilia then again spoke herself. Mrs. Harrel, much softened by her late acts of kindness, was no longer offended by her interference, but contented herself with confessing that she quite hated the country, and could only bear to live in it in summer time. And when Cecilia very earnestly expostulated on the weakness of such an objection to a step absolutely necessary for her future safety and happiness, she said, *she could do no worse than that if already ruined*, and therefore that she thought *it would be very hard to expect from her such a sacrifice beforehand*.

It was in vain Cecilia remonstrated: Mrs. Harrel's love of pleasure was stronger than her understanding; and therefore, though she
listened

listened to her with patience, she concluded with the same answer she had begun.

Cecilia, then, though almost heartless, resolved upon talking with Mr. Harrel himself: and therefore, taking an opportunity which he had not time to elude, she ingenuously told him her opinion of his danger, and of the manner in which it might be avoided.

He paid unusual attention to her advice, but said she was much mistaken with respect to his affairs, which he believed he should now very speedily retrieve, as he had had the preceding night an uncommon *run of luck*, and flattered himself with being able very shortly to pay all his debts, and begin the world again upon a new score.

This open confession of gaming was but a new shock to Cecilia, who scrupled not to represent to him the uncertainty of so hazardous a reliance, and the inevitable evils of so destructive a practice.

She made not, however, the least impression upon his mind; he assured her he doubted not giving her shortly a good account of himself, and that living in the country was a resource of desperation which need not be anticipated.

Cecilia, though grieved and provoked by their mutual folly and blindness, could proceed no further: advice and admonition she spared not, but authority she had none to use. She regretted her ineffectual attempt to
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Mr. Arnott, who was yet more cruelly afflicted at it; but though they conversed upon the subject by every opportunity, they were equally unable to relate any success from their efforts, or to devise any plan more likely to ensure it.

C H A P. IV.

A M I S T A K E.

MEAN time young Delvile failed not to honour Cecilia's introduction of him to Mr. Harrel, by waiting upon that gentleman as soon as the ill effects of his accident at the Pantheon permitted him to leave his own house. Mr. Harrel, though just going out when he called, was desirous of being upon good terms with his family, and therefore took him up stairs to present him to his lady, and invited him to tea and cards the next evening.

Cecilia, who was with Mrs. Harrel, did not see him without emotion; which was not much lessened by the task of thanking him for his assistance at the Pantheon, and enquiring how he had himself fared. No sign, however, of emotion appeared in re-
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turn, either when he first addressed, or afterwards answered her: the look of solicitude with which she had been so much struck when they last parted was no longer discernable, and the voice of sensibility which had removed all her doubts, was no longer to be heard. His general ease and natural gaiety were again unruffled; and though he had never seemed really indifferent to her, there was not the least appearance of any added partiality.

Cecilia felt an involuntary mortification as she observed this change: yet, upon reflection, she still attributed his whole behaviour to his mistake with respect to her situation, and therefore was but the more gratified by the preference he occasionally betrayed.

The invitation for the next evening was accepted; and Cecilia, for once, felt no repugnance to joining the company. Young Delville again was in excellent spirits; but though his chief pleasure was evidently derived from conversing with her, she had the vexation to observe that he seemed to think her the undoubted property of the Baronet, always retreating when he approached, and as careful, when next her, to yield his place if he advanced, as, when he was distant, to guard it from all others.

But when Sir Robert was employed at cards, all scruples ceasing, he neglected not to engross her almost wholly. He was eager
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to speak to her of the affairs of Mr. Belfield, which he told her wore now a better aspect. The letter, indeed, of recommendation which he had shewn to her, had failed, as the nobleman to whom it was written had already entered into an engagement for his son; but he had made application elsewhere, which he believed would be successful; and he had communicated his proceedings to Mr. Belfield, whose spirits he hoped would recover by this prospect of employment and advantage. "It is, however, but too true," he added, "that I have rather obtained his consent to the steps I am taking, than his approbation of them; nor do I believe, had I previously consulted him, I should have had even that. Disappointed in his higher views, his spirit is broken, and he is heartless and hopeless, scarce condescending to accept relief, from the bitter remembrance that he expected preferment. Time, however, will blunt this acute sensibility, and reflection will make him blush at this unreasonable delicacy. But we must patiently soothe him till he is more himself; or while we mean to serve, we shall only torment him. Sickness, sorrow, and poverty have all fallen heavily upon him, and they have all fallen at once: we must not, therefore, wonder, to find him intractable, when his mind is as much depressed, as his body is enervated."

Cecilia, to whom his candour and gener-
osity

rosity always gave fresh delight, strengthened his opinions by her concurrence, and confirmed his designs by the interest which she took in them.

From this time he found almost daily some occasion for calling in Portman-square. The application of Cecilia in favour of Mr. Belfield, gave him a right to communicate to her all his proceedings concerning him; and he had some letters to shew, some new scheme to propose, some refusal to lament, or some hope to rejoice over, almost perpetually: or even when these failed, Cecilia had a cold, which he came to enquire after, or Mrs. Harrel gave him an invitation, which rendered any excuse unnecessary. But though his intimacy with Cecilia was increased, though his admiration of her was conspicuous, and his fondness for her society seemed to grow with the enjoyment of it, he yet never manifested any doubt of her engagement with the Baronet, nor betrayed either intention or desire to supplant him. Cecilia, however, repined not much at the mistake, since she thought it might be instrumental to procuring her a more impartial acquaintance with his character, than she could rationally expect, if, as she hoped, the explanation of his error should make him seek her good opinion with more study and design.

To satisfy herself not only concerning the brother but the sister, she again visited Miss Belfield,

Belfield, and had the pleasure of finding her in better spirits, and hearing that the *noble friend* of her brother, whom she had already mentioned, and whom Cecilia had before suspected to be young Delvile, had now pointed out to him a method of conduct by which his affairs might be decently retrieved, and himself creditably employed. Miss Belfield spoke of the plan with the highest satisfaction; yet she acknowledged that her mother was extremely discontented with it, and that her brother himself was rather led by shame than inclination to its adoption. Yet he was evidently easier in his mind, though far from happy, and already so much better, that Mr. Rupil said he would very soon be able to leave his room.

Such was the quiet and contented situation of Cecilia, when one evening, which was destined for company at home, while she was alone in the drawing-room, which Mrs. Harrel had just left to answer a note, Sir Robert Floyer accidentally came up stairs before the other gentlemen.

“Ha!” cried he, the moment he saw her, “at last have I the good fortune to meet with you alone! This, indeed, is a favour I thought I was always to be denied.”

He was then approaching her; but Cecilia, who shrunk involuntarily at the sight of him, was retreating hastily to quit the room, when suddenly recollecting that no better opportunity

portunity might ever offer for a final explanation with him, she irresolutely stopt; and Sir Robert, immediately following, took her hand, and pressing it to his lips as she endeavoured to withdraw it, exclaimed, "You are a most charming creature!" when the door was opened, and young Delvile at the same moment was announced and appeared.

Cecilia, colouring violently, and extremely chagrined, hastily disengaged herself from his hold. Delvile seemed uncertain whether he ought not to retire, which Sir Robert perceiving, bowed to him with an air of mingled triumph and vexation, and said, "Sir, your most obedient!"

The doubt, however, in which every one appeared of what was next to be done, was immediately removed by the return of Mrs. Harrel, and the arrival at almost the same moment of more company.

The rest of the evening was spent, on the part of Cecilia, most painfully: the explanation she had planned had ended in worse than nothing, for by suffering the Baronet to detain her, she had rather shewn a disposition to oblige, than any intention to discard him; and the situation in which she had been surpris'd by young Delvile, was the last to clear the suspicions she so little wish'd him to harbour: while, on his part, the accident seem'd to occasion no other alteration than that of rendering him more than usually assiduous

duous to give way to Sir Robert whenever he approached her.

Nor was Sir Robert slack in taking advantage of this attention: he was highly in spirits, talked to her with more than common freedom, and wore the whole evening an air of exulting satisfaction.

Cecilia, provoked by this presumption, hurt by the behaviour of young Delvile, and mortified by the whole affair, determined to leave this mistake no longer in the power of accident, but to apply immediately to Mr. Delvile senior, and desire him, as her guardian, to wait upon Sir Robert himself, and acquaint him that his perseverance in pursuing her was both useless and offensive: and by this method she hoped at once to disentangle herself for ever from the Baronet, and to discover more fully the sentiments of young Delvile: for the provocation she had just endured, robbed her of all patience for waiting the advice of Mr. Monckton.

C H A P. V.

AN EXPLANATION.

THE following morning, therefore, Cecilia went early to St. James's-Square:
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and, after the usual ceremonies of messages and long waiting, she was shewn into an apartment where she found Mr. Delvile and his son.

She rejoiced to see them together, and determined to make known to them both the purport of her visit: and therefore, after some apologies and a little hesitation, she told Mr. Delvile, that encouraged by his offers of serving her, she had taken the liberty to call upon him with a view to entreat his assistance.

Young Delvile, immediately arising, would have quitted the room; but Cecilia, assuring him she rather desired what she had to say should be known than kept secret, begged that he would not disturb himself.

Delvile, pleased with this permission to hear her, and curious to know what would follow, very readily returned to his seat.

“ I should by no means,” she continued, “ have thought of proclaiming even to the most intimate of my friends, the partiality which Sir Robert Floyer has been pleased to shew me, had he left to me the choice of publishing or concealing it: but, on the contrary, his own behaviour seems intended not merely to display it, but to insinuate that it meets with my approbation. Mr. Harrel, also, urged by too much warmth of friendship, has encouraged this belief; nor, *indeed*, do I know at present where the mistake

take stops, nor what it is report has not scrupled to affirm. But I think I ought no longer to neglect it, and therefore I have presumed to solicit your advice in what manner I may most effectually contradict it."

The extreme surprize of young Delvile at this speech was not more evident than pleasant to Cecilia, to whom it accounted for all that had perplexed her in his conduct, while it animated every expectation she wished to encourage.

"The behaviour of Mr. Harrel," answered Mr. Delvile, "has by no means been such as to lead me to forget that his father was the son of a steward of Mr. Grant, who lived in the neighbourhood of my friend and relation the Duke of Derwent: nor can I sufficiently congratulate myself that I have always declined acting with him. The late Dean, indeed, never committed so strange an impropriety as that of nominating Mr. Harrel and Mr. Briggs coadjutors with Mr. Delvile. The impropriety, however, though extremely offensive to me, has never obliterated from my mind the esteem I bore the Dean: nor can I possibly give a greater proof of it than the readiness I have always shewn to offer my counsel and instruction to his niece. Mr. Harrel, therefore, ought certainly to have desired Sir Robert Floyer to acquaint me with his proposals before he gave to him any answer."

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“Undoubtedly, Sir,” said Cecilia, willing to shorten this parading harangue, “but as he neglected that attention, will you think me too impertinent should I entreat the favour of you to speak with Sir Robert yourself, and explain to him the total inefficacy of his pursuit, since my determination against him is unalterable?”

Here the conference was interrupted by the entrance of a servant who said something to Mr. Delvile, which occasioned his apologizing to Cecilia for leaving her for a few moments, and ostentatiously assuring her that no business, however important, should prevent his thinking of her affairs, or detain him from returning to her as soon as possible.

The astonishment of young Delvile at the strength of her last expression kept him silent some time after his father left the room: and then, with a countenance that still marked his amazement, he said, “Is it possible, Miss Beverley, that I should twice have been thus egregiously deceived; or rather, that the whole town, and even the most intimate of your friends, should so unaccountably have persisted in a mistake.”

“For the town, answered Cecilia, “I know not how it can have had any concern in so small a matter; but for my intimate friends, I have too few to make it probable they should ever have been so strangely misinformed.”

“ Pardon me,” cried he, “ it was from one who ought to know, that I had myself the intelligence.”

“ I intreat you, then,” said Cecilia, “ to acquaint me who it was ?”

“ Mr. Harrel himself; who communicated it to a lady in my hearing, and at a public place.”

Cecilia cast up her eyes in wonder and indignation at a proof so incontrovertable of his falshood, but made not any answer.

“ Even yet,” continued he, “ I can scarcely feel undeceived; your engagement seemed so positive, your connection so irrevocable, — so, — so *fixed*, I mean. —” He hesitated, a little embarrassed; but then suddenly exclaimed, “ Yet whence, if to *neither* favourable, if indifferent alike to Sir Robert and to Belfield, whence that animated apprehension for their safety at the Opera-house? whence that never to be forgotten, *Ob stop him! good God! will nobody stop him!* — Words of anxiety so tender! and sounds that still vibrate in my ear!”

Cecilia, struck with amazement in her turn at the strength of her own expressions, blushed, and for a few minutes hesitated how to answer him: but then, to leave nothing that related to so disagreeable a report in any doubt, she resolved to tell him ingenuously the circumstances that had occasioned her alarm: and therefore, though with some

pain to her modesty, she confessed her fears that she had herself provoked the affront, though her only view had been to discountenance Sir Robert, without meaning to shew any distinction to Mr. Belfield.

Delvile, who seemed charmed with the candour of this explanation, said, when she had finished it, "You are then at liberty? — Ah madam! — how many may rue so dangerous a discovery!"

"Could you think," said Cecilia, endeavouring to speak with her usual ease, "that Sir Robert Floyer would be found so irresistible?"

"Oh no!" cried he, "far otherwise; a thousand times I have wondered at his happiness; a thousand times when I have looked at you, and listened to you, I have thought it impossible! — yet my authority seemed indisputable. And how was I to discredit what was not uttered as a conjecture, but asserted as a fact? asserted, too, by the guardian with whom you lived? and not hinted as a secret, but affirmed as a point settled?"

"Yet surely," said Cecilia, "you have heard me make use of expressions that could not but lead you to suppose there was some mistake, whatever might be the authority which had won your belief."

"No," answered he, "I never supposed any mistake, though sometimes I thought
you

you repented your engagement. I concluded, indeed, you had been unwarily drawn in, and I have even, at times, been tempted to acknowledge my suspicions to you, state your independence, and exhort you — as a *friend*, exhort you — to use it with spirit, and, if you were shackled unwillingly, incautiously, or unworthily, to break the chains by which you were confined, and restore to yourself that freedom of choice, upon the use of which all your happiness must ultimately depend. But I doubted if this were honourable to the Baronet; — and what, indeed, was my right to such a liberty? none that every man might not be proud of, a wish to do honour to myself, under the officious pretence of serving the most amiable of women.”

“Mr. Harrel,” said Cecilia, “has been so strangely bigoted to his friend, that in his eagerness to manifest his regard for him, he seems to have forgotten every other consideration; he would not, else, have spread so widely a report that could so ill stand enquiry.”

“If Sir Robert,” returned he, “is himself deceived while he deceives others, who can forbear to pity him? for my own part, instead of repining that hitherto I have been mistaken, ought I not rather to bless an error that may have been my preservative from danger?”

Cecilia, distressed in what manner to support her part in the conversation, began now to wish the return of Mr. Delvile; and, not knowing what else to say, she expressed her surprise at his long absence.

“It is not, indeed, well timed,” said young Delvile, “just now—at the moment when—” he stopt, and presently exclaiming “Oh dangerous interval!” he arose from his seat in manifest disorder.

Cecilia arose too, and hastily ringing the bell, said, “Mr. Delvile I am sure is detained, and therefore I will order my chair, and call another time.”

“Do I frighten you away?” said he, assuming an appearance more placid.

“No,” answered she, “but I would not hasten Mr. Delvile.”

A servant then came, and said the chair was ready.

She would immediately have followed him, but young Delvile again speaking, she stopt a moment to hear him. “I fear,” said he, with much hesitation, “I have strangely exposed myself—and that you cannot—but the extreme astonishment—” he stopt again, in the utmost confusion, and then adding “you will permit me to attend you to the chair,” he handed her down stairs, and in quitting her, bowed without saying a word more.

Cecilia, who was almost wholly indifferent

ent to every part of the explanation but that which had actually passed, was now in a state of felicity more delightful than any she had ever experienced. She had not a doubt remaining of her influence over the mind of young Delvile, and the surprise which had made him rather betray than express his regard, was infinitely more flattering and satisfactory to her than any formal or direct declaration. She had now convinced him she was disengaged, and in return, though without seeming to intend it, he had convinced her of the deep interest which he took in the discovery. His perturbation, the words which escaped him, and his evident struggle to say no more, were proofs just such as she wished to receive of his partial admiration, since while they satisfied her heart, they also soothed her pride, by shewing a diffidence of success which assured her that her own secret was still sacred, and that no weakness or inadvertency on her part had robbed her of the power of mingling dignity with the frankness with which she meant to receive his addresses. All, therefore, that now employed her care, was to keep off any indissoluble engagement till each should be better known to the other.

For this reserve, however, she had less immediate occasion than she expected; she saw no more of young Delvile that day; neither did he appear the next. The third

she fully expected him,—but still he came not. And while she wondered at an absence so uncommon, she received a note from Lord Ernolf, to beg permission to wait upon her for two minutes, at any time she would appoint.

She readily sent word that she should be at home for the rest of the day, as she wished much for an opportunity of immediately finishing every affair but one, and setting her mind at liberty to think only of that which she desired should prosper.

Lord Ernolf was with her in half an hour. She found him sensible and well bred, extremely desirous to promote her alliance with his son, and apparently as much pleased with herself as with her fortune. He acquainted her that he had addressed himself to Mr. Harrel long since, but had been informed that she was actually engaged to Sir Robert Floyer: he should, therefore, have forborn taking up any part of her time, had he not, the preceding day, while on a visit at Mr. Delville's, been assured that Mr. Harrel was mistaken, and that she had not yet declared for any body. He hoped, therefore, that she would allow his son the honour of waiting upon her, and permit him to talk with Mr. Briggs, who he understood was her acting guardian, upon such matters as ought to be speedily adjusted.

Cecilia thanked him for the honour he intended

tended her, and confirmed the truth of the account he had heard in St. James's-Square, but at the same time told him she must decline receiving any visits from his lordship's son, and entreated him to take no measure towards the promotion of an affair which never could succeed.

He seemed much concerned at her answer, and endeavoured for some time to soften her, but found her so steady, though civil in her refusal, that he was obliged, however unwillingly, to give up his attempt.

Cecilia, when he was gone, reflected with much vexation on the readiness of the Delvilles to encourage his visit; she considered, however, that the intelligence he had heard might possibly be gathered in general conversation; but she blamed herself that she had not led to some enquiry what part of the family he had seen, and who was present when the information was given him.

Mean while she found that neither coldness, distance, nor aversion were sufficient to repress Sir Robert Floyer, who continued to persecute her with as much confidence of success as could have arisen from the utmost encouragement. She again, though with much difficulty, contrived to speak with Mr. Harrel upon the subject, and openly accused him of spreading a report abroad, as well as countenancing an expectation at

home, that had neither truth nor justice to support them.

Mr. Harrel, with his usual levity and carelessness, laughed at the charge, but denied any belief in her displeasure, and affected to think she was merely playing the coquet, while Sir Robert was not the less her decided choice.

Provoked and wearied, Cecilia resolved no longer to depend upon any body but herself for the management of her own affairs; and therefore, to conclude the business without any possibility of further cavilling, she wrote the following note to Sir Robert herself.

To Sir ROBERT FLOYER, Bart.

MISS BEVERLEY presents her compliments to Sir Robert Floyer, and as she has some reason to fear Mr. Harrel did not explicitly acquaint him with her answer to the commission with which he was entrusted, she thinks it necessary, in order to obviate any possible misunderstanding, to take this method of returning him thanks for the honour of his good opinion, but of begging at the same time that he would not lose a moment upon her account, as her thanks are all she can now, or ever, offer in return.

Portman-Square,

May 11th, 1779.

To.

To this note Cecilia received no answer: but she had the pleasure to observe that Sir Robert forbore his usual visit on the day she sent it, and, though he appeared again the day following, he never spoke to her, and seemed sullen and out of humour.

Yet still young Delvile came not, and still, as her surprise encreased, her tranquillity was diminished. She could form no excuse for his delay, nor conjecture any reason for his absence. Every motive seemed to favour his seeking, and not one his shunning her: the explanation which had so lately passed had informed him he had no rival to fear, and the manner in which he had heard it assured her the information was not indifferent to him; why, then, so assiduous in his visits when he thought her engaged, and so slack in all attendance when he knew she was at liberty?

C H A P. VI.

A. MURMURING.

UNABLE to relieve herself from this perplexity, Cecilia, to divert her chagrin, again visited Miss Belfield. She had then

then the pleasure to hear that her brother was much recovered, and had been able, the preceding day, to take an airing, which he had borne so well that Mr. Rupil had charged him to use the same exercise every morning.

“ And will he ? ” said Cecilia.

“ No, madam, I am sadly afraid not,” she answered, “ for coach-hire is very expensive, and we are willing, now, to save all we can in order to help fitting him out for going abroad.”

Cecilia then earnestly entreated her to accept some assistance ; but she assured her she did not dare without the consent of her mother, which, however, she undertook to obtain.

The next day, when Cecilia called to hear her success, Mrs. Belfield, who hitherto had kept out of sight, made her appearance. She found her, alike in person, manners and conversation, a coarse and ordinary woman, not more unlike her son in talents and acquired accomplishments, than dissimilar to her daughter in softness and natural delicacy.

The moment Cecilia was seated, she began, without waiting for any ceremony, or requiring any sollicitation, abruptly to talk of her affairs, and repiningly to relate her misfortunes.

“ I find, madam,” she said, “ you have been so kind as to visit my daughter Henny a great many times, but as I have no time
for

for company, I have always kept out of the way, having other things to do than sit still to talk. I have had a sad time of it here, ma'am with my poor son's illness, having no conveniencies about me, and much ado to make him mind me; for he's all for having his own way, poor dear soul; and I'm sure I don't know who could contradict him, for it's what I never had the heart to do. But then, ma'am, what is to come of it? You see how bad things go! for though I have got a very good income, it won't do for every thing. And if it was as much again, I should want to save it all now. For here my poor son, you see, is reduced all in a minute, as one may say, from being one of the first gentlemen in the town, to a mere poor object, without a farthing in the world!"

"He is, however, I hope, now much better in his health?" said Cecilia.

"Yes, madam, thank heaven; for if he was worse, those might tell of it that would, for I'm sure I should never live to hear of it. He has been the best son in the world, madam, and used nothing but the best company, for I spared neither pains nor cost to bring him up genteelly, and I believe there's not a nobleman in the land that looks more the gentleman. However, there's come no good of it, for though his acquaintances was all among the first quality, he never received

the

the value of a penny from the best of them. So I have no great need to be proud. But I meant for the best, though I have often enough wished I had not meddled in the matter, but left him to be brought up in the shop, as his father was before him."

"His present plan, however," said Cecilia, "will I hope make you ample amends both for your sufferings and your tendernefs."

"What, madam, when he is going to leave me, and settle in foreign parts? If you was a mother yourself, madam, you would not think that such good amends."

"Settle?" said Cecilia, "No, he only goes for a year or two."

"That's more than I can say, madam, or any body else; and nobody knows what may happen in that time. And how I shall keep myself up when he's beyond seas, I am sure I don't know, for he has always been the pride of my life, and every penny I saved for him, I thought to have been paid in pounds."

"You will still have your daughter, and she seems so amiable, that I am sure you can want no consolation she will not endeavour to give you."

"But what is a daughter, madam, to such a son as mine? a son that I thought to have seen living like a prince, and sending his own coach for me to dine with him! And now he's going to be taken away from
me,

me, and nobody knows if I shall live till he comes back. But I may thank myself, for if I had but been content to see him brought up in the shop — yet all the world would have cried shame upon it, for when he was quite a child in arms, the people used all to say he was born to be a gentleman, and would live to make many a fine lady's heart ache."

"If he can but make *your* heart easy," said Cecilia, smiling, "we will not grieve that the fine ladies should escape the prophecy."

"O, ma'am, I don't mean by that to say he has been over gay among the ladies, for it's a thing I never heard of him; and I dare say if any lady was to take a fancy to him, she'd find there was not a modest young man in the world. But you must needs think what a hardship it is to me to have him turn out so unlucky, after all I have done for him, when I thought to have seen him at the top of the tree, as one may say!"

"He will yet, I hope," said Cecilia, "make you rejoice in all your kindness to him: his health is already returning, and his affairs wear again a more prosperous aspect."

"But do you suppose, ma'am, that having him sent two or three hundred miles away from me, with some young master to take care of, is the way to make up to me what I have gone through for him? why I used to deny

deny myself every thing in the world, in order to save money to buy him smart cloaths, and let him go to the Opera, and Ranelagh, and such sort of places, that he might keep himself in fortune's way! and now you see the end of it! here he is, in a little shabby room up two pair of stairs, with not one of the great folks coming near him, to see if he's so much as dead or alive."

"I do not wonder," said Cecilia, "that you resent their shewing so little gratitude for the pleasure and entertainment they have formerly received from him: but comfort yourself that it will at least secure you from any similar disappointment, as Mr. Belfield will, in future, be guarded from forming such precarious expectations."

"But what good will that do me, ma'am, for all the money he has been throwing after them all this while? do you think I would have scraped it up for him, and gone without every thing in the world, to see it all end in this manner? why he might as well have been brought up the commonest journeyman, for any comfort I shall have of him at this rate. And suppose he should be drowned in going beyond seas, what am I to do then?"

"You must not," said Cecilia, "indulge such fears; I doubt not but your son will return well, and return all that you wish."

"Nobody knows that, ma'am; and the only way to be certain is for him not to go at all;

all; and I'm surpris'd, ma'am, you can wish him to make such a journey to nobody knows where, with nothing but a young master that he must as good as teach his A. B. C. all the way they go!"

"Certainly," said Cecilia, amazed at this accusation, "I should not wish him to go abroad, if any thing more eligible could be done by his remaining in England; but as no prospect of that sort seems before him, you must endeavour to reconcile yourself to parting with him."

"Yes, but how am I to do that, when I don't know if ever I shall see him again? Who could have thought of his living so among the great folks, and then coming to want! I'm sure I thought they'd have provided for him like a son of their own, for he used to go about to all the public places just as they did themselves. Day after day I used to be counting for when he would come to tell me he'd got a place at court, or something of that sort, for I never could tell what it would be: and then the next news I heard, was that he was shut up in this poor bit of a place, with nobody troubling their heads about him! however, I'll never be persuaded but he might have done better, if he would but have spoke a good word for himself, or else have let me done it for him: instead of which, he never would so much as let me see any of his grand friends, though I would
not

not have made the least scruple in the world to have asked them for any thing he had a mind to."

Cecilia again endeavoured to give her comfort; but finding her only satisfaction was to express her discontent, she arose to take leave. But, turning first to Miss Belfield, contrived to make a private enquiry whether she might repeat her offer of assistance. A downcast and dejected look answering in the affirmative, she put into her hand a ten pound bank note, and wishing them good morning, hurried out of the room.

Miss Belfield was running after her, but stopt by her mother, who called out, "what is it?—How much is it?—Let me look at it!"—And then, following Cecilia herself, she thanked her aloud all the way down stairs for her *genteelness*, assuring her she would not fail making it known to her son.

Cecilia at this declaration turned back, and exhorted her by no means to mention it; after which she got into her chair, and returned home; pitying Miss Belfield for the unjust partiality shewn to her brother, and excusing the proud shame he had manifested of his relations, from the vulgarity and selfishness of her who was at the head of them.

Almost a fortnight had now elapsed since her explanation with young Delvile, yet not once had he been in Portman-square, though

in the fortnight which had preceded, scarce a day had passed which had not afforded him some pretence for calling there.

At length a note arrived from Mrs. Delvile. It contained the most flattering reproaches for her long absence, and a pressing invitation that she would dine and spend the next day with her.

Cecilia, who had merely denied herself the pleasure of this visit from an apprehension of seeming too desirous of keeping up the connexion, now, from the same sense of propriety, determined upon making it, wishing equally to avoid all appearance of consciousness, either by seeking or avoiding the intimacy of the family.

Not a little was her anxiety to know in what manner young Delvile would receive her, whether he would be grave or gay, agitated, as during their last conversation, or easy, as in the meetings which had preceded it.

She found Mrs. Delvile, however, alone; and extremely kind to her, yet much surprised, and half displeased, that she had so long been absent. Cecilia, though somewhat distressed what excuses to offer, was happy to find herself so highly in favour, and not very reluctant to promise more frequent visits in future.

They were then summoned to dinner; but still no young Delvile was visible: they were
joined

joined only by his father, and she found that no one else was expected.

Her astonishment now was greater than ever, and she could account by no possible conjecture for a conduct so extraordinary. Hitherto, whenever she had visited in St. James's-Square by appointment, the air with which he had received her, constantly announced that he had impatiently waited her arrival; he had given up other engagements to stay with her, he had openly expressed his hopes that she would never be long absent, and seemed to take a pleasure in her society to which every other was inferior. And now, how striking the difference! he forbore all visits at the house where she resided, he even flew from his own when he knew she was approaching it!

Nor was this the only vexation of which this day was productive; -Mr. Delvile, when the servants were withdrawn after dinner, expressed some concern that he had been called from her during their last conversation, and added that he would take the present opportunity to talk with her upon some matters of importance.

He then began the usual parading prelude, which, upon all occasions, he thought necessary, in order to enhance the value of his interposition, remind her of her inferiority, and impress her with a deeper sense of the honour which his guardianship conferred upon

upon her: after which he proceeded to make a formal enquiry, whether she had positively dismissed Sir Robert Floyer?

She assured him she had.

“ I understood my Lord Ernolf,” said he, “ that you had totally discouraged the addresses of his son ? ”

“ Yes, Sir,” answered Cecilia, “ for I never mean to receive them.”

“ Have you, then, any other engagement ? ”

“ No, Sir,” cried she, colouring between shame and displeasure, “ none at all.”

“ This is a very extraordinary circumstance ! ” replied he: “ the son of an earl to be rejected by a young woman of no family, and yet no reason assigned for it ! ”

This contemptuous speech so cruelly shocked Cecilia, that though he continued to harangue her for a great part of the afternoon, she only answered him when compelled by some question, and was so evidently discomposed, that Mrs. Delvile, who perceived her uneasiness with much concern, redoubled her civilities and caresses, and used every method in her power to oblige and enliven her.

Cecilia was not ungrateful for her care, and shewed her sense of it by added respect and attention; but her mind was disturbed, and she quitted the house as soon as she was able.

Mr. Delvile's speech, from her previous knowledge of the extreme haughtiness of his
character,

character, would not have occasioned her the smallest emotion, had it merely related to him or to herself: but as it concerned Lord Ernolf, she regarded it as also concerning his son; and she found that, far from trying to promote the union Mr. Monckton had told her he had planned, he did not seem even to think of it, but, on the contrary, proposed and seconded with all his interest another alliance.

This, added to the behaviour of young Delvile, made her suspect that some engagement was in agitation on his own part, and that while she thought him so sedulous only to avoid her, he was simply occupied in seeking another. This painful suggestion, which every thing seemed to confirm, again overset all her schemes, and destroyed all her visionary happiness. Yet how to reconcile it with what had passed at their last meeting she knew not: she had then every reason to believe that his heart was in her power, and that courage, or an opportunity more seasonable, was all he wanted to make known his devotion to her? why, then, shun if he loved her? why, if he loved her not, seem so perturbed at the explanation of her independence?

A very little time, however, she hoped would unravel this mystery; in two days, the entertainment which Mr. Harrel had planned, to deceive the world by an appearance of
affluence

affluence to which he had lost all title, was to take place; young Delvile, in common with every other person who had ever been seen at the house, had early received an invitation, which he had readily promised to accept some time before the conversation that seemed the period of their acquaintance had passed. Should he, after being so long engaged, fail to keep his appointment, she could no longer have any doubt of the justice of her conjecture; should he, on the contrary, again appear, from his behaviour and his looks she might perhaps be able to gather why he had so long been absent.

C H A P. VII.

A R O U T.

THE day at length arrived of which the evening and the entrance of company were, for the first time, as eagerly wished by Cecilia as by her dissipated host and hostess. No expence and no pains had been spared to render this long projected entertainment splendid and elegant; it was to begin with a concert, which was to be followed by a ball, and succeeded by a supper.

Cecilia, though unusually anxious about her own affairs, was not so engrossed by them as to behold with indifference a scene of such unjustifiable extravagance; it contributed to render her thoughtful and uneasy, and to deprive her of all mental power of participating in the gaiety of the assembly. Mr. Arnott was yet more deeply affected by the mad folly of the scheme, and received from the whole evening no other satisfaction than that which a look of sympathetic concern from Cecilia occasionally afforded him.

Till nine o'clock no company appeared, except Sir Robert Floyer, who stayed from dinner time, and Mr. Morrice, who having received an invitation for the evening, was so much delighted with the permission to again enter the house, that he made use of it between six and seven o'clock, and before the family had left the dining parlour. He apologized with the utmost humility to Cecilia for the unfortunate accident at the Pantheon; but as to her it had been productive of nothing but pleasure, by exciting in young Delvile the most flattering alarm for her safety, she found no great difficulty in according him her pardon.

Among those who came in the first crowd was Mr. Monckton, who, had he been equally unconscious of sinister views, would, in following his own inclination, have been *as* early in his attendance as Mr. Morrice; but

but who, to obviate all suspicious remarks, conformed to the fashionable tardiness of the times.

Cecilia's chief apprehension for the evening was that Sir Robert Floyer would ask her to dance with him, which she could not refuse without sitting still during the ball, nor accept, after the reports she knew to be spread, without seeming to give a public sanction to them. To Mr. Monckton therefore, innocently considering him as a married man and her old friend, she frankly told her distress, adding, by way of excuse for the hint, that the partners were to be changed every two dances.

Mr. Monckton, though his principal study was carefully to avoid all public gallantry or assiduity towards Cecilia, had not the forbearance to resist this intimation, and therefore she had the pleasure of telling Sir Robert, when he asked the honour of her hand for the two first dances, that she was already engaged.

She then expected that he would immediately secure her for the two following; but, to her great joy, he was so much piqued by the evident pleasure with which she announced her engagement, that he proudly walked away without adding another word.

Much satisfied with this arrangement, and not without hopes that, if she was at liberty when he arrived, she might be applied to by

young Delvile, she now endeavoured to procure herself a place in the music room.

This, with some difficulty, she effected; but though there was an excellent concert, in which several capital performers played and sung, she found it impossible to hear a note, as she chanced to be seated just by Miss Leeson, and two other young ladies, who were paying one another compliments upon their dress and their looks, settling to dance in the same cotillon, guessing who would begin the minuets, and wondering there were not more gentlemen. Yet, in the midst of this unmeaning conversation, of which she remarked that Miss Leeson bore the principal part, not one of them failed, from time to time, to exclaim with great rapture “*What sweet music? —*” “*Oh how charming!*” “*Did you ever bear any thing so delightful? —*”

“Ah,” said Cecilia to Mr. Gosport, who now approached her, “but for your explanatory observations, how much would the sudden loquacity of this *supercilious* lady, whom I had imagined all but dumb, have perplexed me!”

“Those who are most silent to strangers,” answered Mr. Gosport, “commonly talk most fluently to their inmates, for they are deeply in arrears, and eager to pay off their debts. Miss Leeson now is in her proper set, and therefore appears in her natural character: and the poor girl’s joy in being able to utter
all

all the nothings she has painfully hoarded while separated from her coterie, gives to her now the wild transport of a bird just let loose from a cage. I rejoice to see the little creature at liberty, for what can be so melancholy as a forced appearance of thinking, where there are no materials for such an occupation?"

Soon after, Miss Larolles, who was laughing immoderately, contrived to crowd herself into their party, calling out to them, "O you have had the greatest loss in the world! if you had but been in the next-room just now!—there's the drollest figure there you can conceive: enough to frighten one to look at him." And presently she added "O Lord, if you step a little this way, you may see him!"

Then followed a general tittering, accompanied with exclamations of "Lord, what a fright!" "It's enough to kill one with laughing to look at him!" "Did you ever see such a horrid creature in your life?" And soon after, one of them screamed out "O Lord, see!—he's grinning at Miss Beverley!"

Cecilia then turned her head towards the door, and there, to her own as well as her neighbours amazement, she perceived Mr. Briggs! who, in order to look about him at his ease, was standing upon a chair, from which, having singled her out, he was re-

garding her with a facetious smirk, which, when it caught her eye, was converted into a familiar nod.

She returned his salutation, but was not much charmed to observe, that presently descending from his exalted post, which had moved the wonder and risibility of all the company, he made a motion to approach her; for which purpose, regardless of either ladies or gentlemen in his way, he sturdily pushed forward, with the same unconcerned hardiness he would have forced himself through a crowd in the street; and taking not the smallest notice of their frowns, supplications that he would stand still, and exclamations of "Pray, Sir!" — "Lord, how troublesome!" and "Sir, I do assure you here's no room!" he fairly and adroitly elbowed them from him till he reached her seat: and then, with a waggish grin, he looked round, to shew he had got the better, and to see whom he had discomposed.

When he had enjoyed this triumph, he turned to Cecilia, and chucking her under the chin, said "Well, my little duck, how goes it? got to you at last; squeezed my way; would not be nicked; warrant I'll mob with the best of them! Look here! all in a heat! — hot as the dog-days."

And then, to the utter consternation of the company, he took off his wig to wipe his head! — which occasioned such universal
horror,

horror, that all who were near the door escaped into other apartments, while those who were too much enclosed for flight, with one accord turned away their heads.

Captain Aresby, being applied to by some of the ladies to remonstrate upon this unexampled behaviour, advanced to him, and said, "I am quite *abimé*, Sir, to incommode you, but the commands of the ladies are insuperable. Give me leave, Sir, to entreat that you would put on your wig."

"My wig?" cried he, "ay, ay, shall in a moment, only want to wipe my head first."

"I am quite *assommé*, Sir," returned the Captain, "to disturb you, but I must really hint you don't comprehend me: the ladies are extremely inconvenienced by these sort of fights, and we make it a principle they should never be *accablées* with them."

"Anan!" cried Mr. Briggs, staring.

"I say, Sir," replied the Captain, "the ladies are quite *au desespoir* that you will not cover your head."

"What for?" cried he, "what's the matter with my head? ne'er a man here got a better! very good stuff in it; won't change it with ne'er a one of you!"

And then, half unconscious of the offence he had given, and half angry at the rebuke he had received, he leisurely completed his design, and again put on his wig, settling it to his face with as much composure as if he

had performed the operation in his own dressing-room.

The captain having gained his point, walked away, making, however, various grimaces of disgust, and whispering from side to side "he's the most petrifying fellow I ever was *obfède* by!"

Mr. Briggs then, with much derision, and sundry distortions of countenance, listened to an Italian song: after which, he bustled back to the outer apartment, in search of Cecilia, who, ashamed of seeming a party in the disturbance he had excited, had taken the opportunity of his dispute with the Captain to run into the next room; where, however, he presently found her, while she was giving an account to Mr. Gosport of her connexion with him, to which Morrice, ever curious and eager to know what was going forward, was also listening.

"Ah, little chick!" cried he, "got to you again! soon out-jostle those jemmy sparks! But where's the supper? see nothing of the supper! Time to go to bed,—suppose there is none; all a take-in; nothing but a little piping."

"Supper, Sir?" cried Cecilia; "the Concert is not over yet. Was supper mentioned in your card of invitation?"

"Ay, to be sure, should not have come else. Don't visit often; always costs money. Wish I had not come now; wore a
hole

hole in my shoe; hardly a crack in it before."

"Why you did not walk, Sir?"

"Did, did; why not? Might as well have stayed away though; daubed my best coat, like to have spoilt it."

"So much the better for the taylor, Sir," said Morrice, pertly, "for then you must have another."

"Another! what for? ha'n't had this seven years; just as good as new."

"I hope," said Cecilia, "you had not another fall?"

"Worse, worse; like to have lost my bundle."

"What bundle, Sir?"

"Best coat and waistcoat; brought 'em in my handkerchief, purpose to save them. When will Mr. Harrel do as much?"

"But had you no apprehensions, Sir," said Mr. Gosport drily, "that the handkerchief would be the sooner worn out for having a knot tied in it?"

"Took care of that, tied it slack. Met an unlucky boy: little dog gave it a pluck; knot split; coat and waistcoat popt out."

"But what became of the boy, Sir?" cried Morrice, "I hope he got off?"

"Could not run for laughing; caught him in a minute; gave him something to laugh for; drubbed him soundly."

"O poor fellow!" cried Morrice with a

loud hallow, "I am really sorry for him. But pray, Sir, what became of your best coat and waistcoat while you gave him this drubbing? did you leave them in the dirt?"

"No, Mr. Nincompoop," answered Briggs angrily, "I put them on a stall."

"That was a perilous expedient, Sir," said Mr. Gosport, "and I should fear might be attended with ill consequences, for the owner of the stall would be apt to expect some little *douceur*. How did you manage, Sir?"

"Bought a halfpenny worth of apples. Serve for supper to-morrow night."

"But how, Sir, did you get your cloaths dried, or cleaned?"

"Went to an alehouse; cost me half a pint."

"And pray, Sir," cried Morrice, "where, at last, did you make your toilette?"

"Sha'n't tell, sha'n't tell; ask no more questions. What signifies where a man slips on a coat and waistcoat?"

"Why, Sir, this will prove an expensive expedition to you," said Mr. Gosport, very gravely: "Have you cast up what it may cost you?"

"More than it's worth, more than it's worth," answered he pettishly; "ha'n't laid out so much in pleasure these five years."

"Ha! ha!" cried Morrice, hallowing
aloud,

aloud, why it can't be more than sixpence in all!"

"Sixpence?" repeated he scornfully, "if you don't know the value of sixpence, you'll never be worth five pence three farthings. How do think got rich, hay? — by wearing fine coats, and frizzling my pate? No, no; Master Harrel for that! ask him if he'll cast an account with me! — never knew a man worth a penny with such a coat as that on,"

Morrice again laughed, and again Mr. Briggs reproved him; and Cecilia, taking advantage of the squabble, stole back to the music-room.

Here, in a few minutes, Mrs. Panton, a lady who frequently visited at the house, approached Cecilia, followed by a gentleman, whom she had never before seen, but who was so evidently charmed with her, that he had looked at no other object since his entrance into the house.

Mrs. Panton, presenting him to her by the name of Mr. Marriot, told her he had begged her intercession for the honour of her hand in the two first dances: and the moment she answered that she was already engaged, the same request was made for the two following. Cecilia had then no excuse, and was therefore obliged to accept him.

The hope she had entertained in the early part of the evening, was already almost wholly extinguished! Delvile appeared not!

though her eye watched the entrance of every new visitor, and her vexation made her believe that he alone, of all the town, was absent.

When the Concert was over, the company joined promiscuously for chat and refreshments before the ball; and Mr. Gosport, advanced to Cecilia, to relate a ridiculous dispute which had just passed between Mr. Briggs and Morrice.

“You, Mr. Gosport,” said Cecilia, “who seem to make the *minutiæ* of absurd characters your study, can explain to me, perhaps, why Mr. Briggs seems to have as much pleasure in proclaiming his meanness, as in boasting his wealth?”

“Because,” answered Mr. Gosport, “he knows them, in his own affairs, to be so nearly allied, that but for practising the one, he had never possessed the other; ignorant, therefore, of all discrimination, — except, indeed, of pounds, shillings and pence! — he supposes them necessarily inseparable, because with him they were united. What you, however, call meanness, he thinks wisdom, and recollects, therefore, not with shame but with triumph, the various little arts and subterfuges by which his coffers have been filled.

Here Lord Ernolf, concluding Cecilia still disengaged from seeing her only discourse with Mr. Gosport and Mr. Monckton, one of whom

whom was old enough to be her father, and the other was a *married man*, advanced, and presented to her Lord Derford, his son, a youth not yet of age, solicited for him the honour of her hand as his partner.

Cecilia having a double excuse, easily declined this proposal; Lord Ernolf, however, was too earnest to be repulsed, and told her he should again try his interest when her two present engagements were fulfilled. Hopeless, now, of young Delvile, she heard this intimation with indifference; and was accompanying Mr. Monckton into the ball-room, when Miss Larolles, flying towards her with an air of infinite eagerness caught her hand, and said in a whisper "pray let me wish you joy!"

"Certainly!" said Cecilia, "but pray let me ask you of what?"

"O Lord, now," answered she, "I am sure you know what I mean; but you must know I have a prodigious monstrous great favour to beg of you: now pray don't refuse me; I assure you if you do, I shall be so mortified you've no notion."

"Well, what is it?"

"Nothing but to let me be one of your bride maids. I assure you I shall take it as the greatest favour in the world."

"My bride maid!" cried Cecilia; "but do you not think the bridegroom himself will

will be rather offended to find a bridemaïd appointed, before he is even thought of?"

"O pray, now," cried she, "don't be ill-natured, for if you are, you've no idea how I shall be disappointed. Only conceive what happened to me three weeks ago! you must know I was invited to Miss Clinton's wedding, and so I made up a new dress on purpose, in a very particular sort of shape, quite of my own invention, and it had the sweetest effect you can conceive; well, and when the time came, do you know her mother happened to die! Never any thing was so excessive unlucky, for now she won't be married this half year, and my dress will be quite old and yellow; for it's all white, and the most beautiful thing you ever saw in your life."

"Upon my word you are very obliging!" cried Cecilia laughing; "and pray do you make interest regularly round with all your female acquaintance to be married upon this occasion, or am I the only one you think this distress will work upon?"

"Now how excessive teasing!" cried Miss Larolles, "when you know so well what I mean, and when all the town knows as well as myself."

Cecilia then seriously enquired whether she had really any meaning at all.

"Lord yes," answered she, "you know I mean

mean about Sir Robert Floyer : for I'm told you've quite refused Lord Derford."

" And are you also told that I have accepted Sir Robert Floyer ? "

" O dear yes!—the jewels are brought, and the equipages are built; it's quite a settled thing, I know very well."

Cecilia then very gravely began an attempt to undeceive her ; but the dancing beginning also at the same time, she stayed not to hear her, hurrying, with a beating heart, to the place of action. Mr. Monckton and his fair partner then followed, mutually exclaiming against Mr. Harrel's impenetrable conduct ; of which Cecilia, however, in a short time ceased wholly to think, for as soon as the first cotillon was over, she perceived young Delvile just walking into the room.

Surprise, pleasure and confusion assailed her all at once ; she had entirely given up her expectation of seeing him, and an absence so determined had led her to conclude he had pursuits which ought to make her join in wishing it lengthened ; but now he appeared, that conclusion, with the fear that gave rise to it, vanished ; and she regretted nothing but the unfortunate succession of engagements which would prevent her dancing with him at all, and probably keep off all conversation with him till supper time.

She soon, however, perceived a change in his air and behaviour that extremely asto-

nished her : he looked grave and thoughtful, saluted her at a distance, shewed no sign of any intention to approach her, regarded the dancing and dancers as a public spectacle in which he had no chance of personal interest, and seemed wholly altered, not merely with respect to her, but to himself, as his former eagerness for her society was not more abated than his former general gaiety.

She had no time, however, for comments, as she was presently called to the second cotillon ; but the confused and unpleasant ideas which, without waiting for time or reflection, crowded upon her imagination on observing his behaviour, were not more depressing to herself, than obvious to her partner ; Mr. Monckton by the change in her countenance first perceived the entrance of young Delvile, and by her apparent emotion and uneasiness, readily penetrated into the state of her mind ; he was confirmed that her affections were engaged ; he saw, too, that she was doubtful with what return.

The grief with which he made the first discovery, was somewhat lessened by the hopes he conceived from the second ; yet the evening was to him as painful as to Cecilia, since he now knew that whatever prosperity might ultimately attend his address and assiduity, her heart was not her own to bestow ; and that even were he sure of young Delvile's *indifference*, and actually at liberty to make

propofals for himfelf, the time of being firft in her efteem was at an end, and the long-earned good opinion which he had hoped would have ripened into affection, might now be wholly undermined by the fudden impref- fion of a lively ftranger, without trouble to himfelf, and perhaps without pleasure!

Reflections fuch as thefe wholly embittered the delight he had promifed himfelf from dancing with her, and took from him all power to combat the anxiety with which ſhe was feized: when the fecond cotillon, therefore, was over, inftead of following her to a feat, or taking the privilege of his pre- fent fituation to converse with her, the jea- lousy rifing in his breaſt robbed him of all fatisfaction, and gave to him no other defire than to judge its juſtice by watching her motions at a diftance.

Mean while Cecilia, inattentive whether he accompanied or quitted her, proceeded to the firft vacant feat. Young Delvile was ſtanding near it, and in a ſhort time, but rather as if he could not avoid than as if he wiſhed it, he came to enquire how ſhe did.

The ſimpleſt queſtion, in the then ſitua- tion of her mind, was ſufficient to confuſe her, and though ſhe answered, ſhe hardly knew what he had asked. A minute's recol- lection, however, reſtored an apparent com- poſure, and ſhe talked to him of Mrs. Del- vile, with her uſual partial regard for that
lady,

lady, and with an earnest endeavour to seem unconscious of any alteration in his behaviour.

Yet, to him, even this trifling and general conversation was evidently painful, and he looked relieved by the approach of Sir Robert Floyer, who soon after joined them.

At this time a young lady who was sitting by Cecilia, called to a servant who was passing, for a glass of lemonade: Cecilia desired he would bring her one also; but Delvile, not sorry to break off the discourse, said he would himself be her cup-bearer, and for that purpose went away.

A moment after, the servant returned with some lemonade to Cecilia's neighbour, and Sir Robert, taking a glass from him, brought it to Cecilia at the very instant young Delvile came with another.

"I think I am before-hand with you, Sir," said the insolent Baronet.

"No, Sir," answered young Delvile, "I think we were both in together: Miss Beverley, however, is steward of the race, and we must submit to her decision."

"Well, madam," cried Sir Robert, "here we stand, waiting your pleasure. Which is to be the happy man!"

"Each, I hope," answered Cecilia, with admirable presence of mind, "since I expect no less than that you will both do me the honour of drinking my health."

This

This little contrivance, which saved her alike from shewing favour or giving offence, could not but be applauded by both parties; and while they obeyed her orders, she took a third glass herself from the servant.

While this was passing, Mr. Briggs, again perceiving her, stumpt hastily towards her, calling out "Ah ha! my duck! what's that? got something nice? Come here, my lad, taste it myself."

He then took a glass, but having only put it to his mouth, made a wry face, and returned it, saying "Bad! bad! poor punch indeed!—not a drop of rum in it!"

"So much the better, Sir," cried Morrice, who diverted himself by following him, "for then you see the master of the house spares in something, and you said he spared in nothing."

"Don't spare in fools!" returned Mr. Briggs, "keeps them in plenty."

"No, Sir, nor in any out of the way characters," answered Morrice.

"So much the worse," cried Briggs, "so much the worse! Eat him out of house and home; won't leave him a rag to his back, nor a penny in his pocket. Never mind 'em, my little duck; mind none of your guardians but me: t'other two a'nt worth a rush."

Cecilia, somewhat ashamed of this speech, looked towards young Delvile, in whom it

occasioned the first smile she had seen that evening.

“ Been looking about for you ! ” continued Briggs, nodding sagaciously ; “ believe I’ve found one will do. Guess what I mean ;—100,000*l.*—hay?—what say to that? any thing better at the west end of the town ? ”

“ 100,000*l.* ” cried Morrice, “ and pray, Sir, who my this be ? ”

“ Not you, Mr. Jackanapes! sure of that. A’n’t quit positive he’ll have you, neither. Think he will, though.”

“ Pray, Sir, what age is he ? ” cried the never-daunted Morrice.

“ Why about—let’s see—don’t know, never heard,—what signifies ? ”

“ But, Sir, he’s an old man, I suppose, by being so rich ? ”

“ Old? no, no such thing; about my own standing.”

“ What, Sir, and do you propose him for an husband to Miss Beverley ? ”

“ Why not? know every a one warmer? think Master Harrel will get her a better; or t’other old Don, in the grand square? ”

“ If you please, Sir,” cried Cecilia hastily, “ we will talk of this matter another time.”

“ No, pray,” cried young Delvile, who could not forbear laughing, “ let it be discussed now.”

“ Hate ’em,” continued Mr. Briggs;
“ hate

“ hate ’em both ! one spending more than he’s worth, cheated and over-reached by fools, running into goal to please a parcel of knaves : t’other counting nothing but uncles and grandfathers, dealing out fine names instead of cash, casting up more cousins than guineas —”

Again Cecilia endeavoured to silence him, but, only chucking her under the chin, he went on, “ Ay, ay, my little duck, never mind ’em ; one of them i’n’t worth a penny, and t’other has nothing in his pockets but lists of the defunct. What good will come of that ? would not give twopence a dozen for ’em ! A poor set of grandees, with nothing but a tie-wig for their portions ! ”

Cecilia, unable to bear this harangue in the presence of young Delvile, who, however, laughed it off with a very good grace, arose with an intention to retreat, which being perceived by Sir Robert Floyer, who had attended to this dialogue with haughty contempt, he came forward, and said “ now then, madam, may I have the honour of your hand ? ”

“ No, Sir,” answered Cecilia, “ I am engaged.”

“ Engaged again ? ” cried he, with the air of a man who thought himself much injured.

“ Glad of it, glad of it ! ” said Mr. Briggs ; “ served very right ! have nothing to say to him, my chick ! ”

“ Why

“ Why not, Sir ? ” cried Sir Robert, with an imperious look.

“ Sha’n’t have her, sha’n’t have her ! can tell you that ; won’t consent ; know you of old.”

“ And what do you know of me, pray Sir ? ”

“ No good, no good ; nothing to say to you ; found fault with my nose ! ha’n’t forgot it.”

At this moment Mr. Marriot came to claim his partner, who, very willing to quit this scene of wrangling and vulgarity, immediately attended him.

Miss Larolles, again flying up to her, said “ O my dear, we are all expiring to know who that creature is ! I never saw such a horrid fright in my life ! ”

Cecilia was beginning to satisfy her, but some more young ladies coming up to join in the request, she endeavoured to pass on : “ O but, cried Miss Larolles, detaining her, “ do pray stop, for I’ve something to tell you that’s so monstrous you’ve no idea. Do you know Mr. Meadows has not danced at all ! and he’s been standing with Mr. Sawyer, and looking on all the time, and whispering and laughing so you’ve no notion. However, I assure you, I’m excessive glad he did not ask me, for all I have been sitting still all this time, for I had a great deal rather sit still, I assure you : only I’m sorry I put on this
dress,

dress, for any thing would have done just to look on in that stupid manner."

Here Mr. Meadows fauntered towards them; and all the young ladies began playing with their fans, and turning their heads another way, to disguise the expectations which his approach awakened; and Miss Larolles, in a hasty whisper to Cecilia, cried, "Pray don't take any notice of what I said, for if he should happen to ask me, I can't well refuse him, you know, for if I do, he'll be so excessive affronted you can't think."

Mr. Meadows then, mixing in the little group, began, with sundry grimaces, to exclaim "how intolerably hot it is! there's no such thing as breathing. How can any body think of dancing! I am amazed Mr. Harrel has not a ventilator in this room. Don't you think it would be a great improvement?"

This speech, though particularly addressed to no one, received immediately an assenting answer from all the young ladies.

Then, turning to Miss Larolles, "Don't you dance?" he said.

"Me?" cried she, embarrassed, "yes, I believe so, — really I don't know, — I a'n't quite determined."

"O, do dance!" cried he stretching himself and yawning, "it always gives me spirits to see you."

Then, turning suddenly to Cecilia, without

any

any previous ceremony of renewing his acquaintance, either by speaking or bowing, he abruptly said "Do you love dancing, ma'am?"

"Yes, Sir, extremely well."

"I am very glad to hear it. You have one thing, then, to soften existence."

"Do you dislike it yourself?"

"What dancing? Oh dreadful! how it was ever adopted in a civilized country, I cannot find out; 'tis certainly a Barbarian exercise, and of savage origin. Don't you think so, Miss Larolles?"

"Lord no," cried Miss Larolles, "I assure you I like it better than any thing; I know nothing so delightful; I declare I dare say I could not live without it; I should be so stupid you can't conceive."

"Why I remember," said Mr. Marriott, "when Mr. Meadows was always dancing himself. Have you forgot, Sir, when you used to wish the night would last for ever, that you might dance without ceasing?"

Mr. Meadows, who was now intently surveying a painting that was over the chimney-piece, seemed not to hear this question, but presently called out, "I am amazed Mr. Harrel can suffer such a picture as this to be in his house. I hate a portrait, 'tis so wearisome looking at a thing that is doing nothing!"

"Do

“ Do you like historical pictures, Sir, any better ? ”

“ O no, I detest them ! views of battles, murders, and death ! Shocking ! shocking ! — I shrink from them with horror ! ”

“ Perhaps you are fond of landscapes ? ”

“ By no means ! Green trees and fat cows ! what do they tell one ? I hate every thing that is insipid. ”

“ Your toleration, then, ” said Cecilia, “ will not be very extensive. ”

“ No, ” said he, yawning, “ one can tolerate nothing ! one’s patience is wholly exhausted by the total tediousness of every thing one sees, and every body one talks with. Don’t you find it so, ma’am ? ”

“ *Sometimes !* ” said Cecilia, rather archly.

“ You are right, ma’am, extremely right ; one does not know what in the world to do with one’s self. At home, one is killed with meditation ; abroad, one is overpowered by ceremony ; no possibility of finding ease or comfort. You never go into public, I think, ma’am ? ”

“ Why not to be much *marked*, I find ! ” said Cecilia, laughing.

“ O, I beg your pardon ! I believe I saw you one evening at Almack’s : I really beg your pardon, but I had quite forgot it. ”

“ Lord, Mr. Meadows, ” said Miss Larolles, “ don’t you know you are meaning

the Pantheon? only conceive how you forget things!”

“The Pantheon, was it? I never know one of those places from another. I heartily wish they were all abolished; I hate public places. 'Tis terrible to be under the same roof with a set of people who would care nothing if they saw one expiring!”

“You are, at least, then, fond of the society of your friends?”

“O no! to be worn out by seeing always the same faces! — one is sick to death of friends; nothing makes one so melancholy.”

Cecilia now went to join the dancers, and Mr. Meadows, turning to Miss Larolles, said “Pray don't let me keep you from dancing; I am afraid you'll lose your place.”

“No,” cried she, bridling, “I sha'nt dance at all.”

“How cruel!” cried he, yawning, “when you know how it exhilarates me to see you! Don't you think this room is very close? I must go and try another atmosphere——But I hope you will relent, and dance?”

And then, stretching his arms as if half asleep, he fauntered into the next room, where he flung himself upon a sofa till the ball was over.

The new partner of Cecilia, who was a wealthy, but very simple young man, used

his utmost efforts to entertain and oblige her, and, flattered by the warmth of his own desire, he fancied that he succeeded; though, in a state of such suspense and anxiety, a man of brighter talents had failed.

At the end of the two dances, Lord Ernolf again attempted to engage her for his son; but she now excused herself from dancing any more, and sat quietly as a spectatress till the rest of the company gave over. Mr. Marriot, however, would not quit her, and she was compelled to support with him a trifling conversation, which, though irksome to herself, to him, who had not *seen her in her happier hour*, was delightful.

She expected every instant to be again joined by young Delvile, but the expectation was disappointed; he came not; she concluded he was in another apartment; the company was summoned to supper, she then thought it impossible to miss him; but, after waiting and looking for him in vain, she found he had already left the house.

The rest of the evening she scarce knew what passed, for she attended to nothing; Mr. Monckton might watch, and Mr. Briggs might exhort her, Sir Robert might display his insolence, or Mr. Marriot his gallantry, —all was equally indifferent, and equally unheeded, and before half the company left the house, she retired to her own room.

She spent the night in the utmost distur-

bance; the occurrences of the evening with respect to young Delvile she looked upon as decisive: if his absence had chagrined her, his presence had still more shocked her, since, while she was left to conjecture, though she had fears she had hopes, and though all she saw was gloomy, all she expected was pleasant; but they had now met, and those expectations proved fallacious. She knew not, indeed, how to account for the strangeness of his conduct; but in seeing it was strange, she was convinced it was unfavourable: he had evidently avoided her while it was in his power, and when, at last, he was obliged to meet her, he was formal, distant, and reserved.

The more she recollected and dwelt upon the difference of his behaviour in their preceding meeting, the more angry as well as amazed she became at the change, and though she still concluded the pursuit of some other object occasioned it, she could find no excuse for his fickleness if that pursuit was recent, nor for his caprice if it was anterior.

C H A P. VIII.

A B R O A D H I N T.

THE next day Cecilia, to drive Delvise a little from her thoughts, which she now no longer wished him to occupy, again made a visit to Miss Belfield, whose society afforded her more consolation than any other she could procure.

She found her employed in packing up, and preparing to remove to another lodging, for her brother, she said, was so much better, that he did not think it right to continue in so disgraceful a situation.

She talked with her accustomed openness of her affairs, and the interest which Cecilia involuntarily took in them, contributed to lessen her vexation in thinking of her own. "The generous friend of my brother," said she, "who, though but a new acquaintance to him, has courted him in all his sorrows, when every body else forsook him, has brought him at last into a better way of thinking. He says there is a gentleman whose son is soon going abroad, who he is almost sure will like my brother vastly, and in another week, he is to be introduced to him. And so, if my mother can but recon-

cile herself to parting with him, perhaps we may all do well again."

"Your mother," said Cecilia, "when he is gone, will better know the value of the blessing she has left in her daughter."

"O no, madam, no; she is wrapt up in him, and cares nothing for all the world besides. It was always so, and we have all of us been used to it. But we have had a sad scene since you were so kind as to come last; for when she told him what you had done, he was almost out of his senses with anger that we had acquainted you with his distress, and he said it was publishing his misery, and undoing whatever his friend or himself could do, for it was making him ashamed to appear in the world, even when his affairs might be better. But I told him again and again that you had as much sweetness as goodness, and instead of hurting his reputation, would do him nothing but credit."

"I am sorry," said Cecilia, "Mrs. Belfield mentioned the circumstance at all; it would have been better, for many reasons, that he should not have heard of it."

"She hoped it would please him," answered Miss Belfield; "however, he made us both promise we would take no such step in future, for he said *we* were not reduced to so much indigence, whatever he was: and that as to our accepting money from other people, that we might save up our own for
him,

him, it would be answering no purpose, for he should think himself a monster to make use of it."

"And what said your mother?"

"Why she gave him a great many promises that she would never vex him about it again; and indeed, much as I know we are obliged to you, madam, and gratefully as I am sure I would lay down my life to serve you, I am very glad in this case that my brother has found it out. For though I so much wish him to do something for himself, and not to be so proud, and live in a manner he has no right to do, I think, for all that, that it is a great disgrace to my poor father's honest memory, to have us turn beggars after his death, when he left us all so well provided for, if he had but known how to be satisfied."

"There is a natural rectitude in your heart," said Cecilia, "that the ablest casuists could not mend."

She then enquired whither they were removing, and Miss Belfield told her to Portland-street, Oxford-Road, where they were to have two apartments up two pair of stairs, and the use of a very good parlour, in which her brother might see his friends. "And this, added she, "is a luxury for which nobody can blame him, because if he has not the appearance of a decent home, no gentleman will employ him."

The Paddington house, she said, was already let, and her mother was determined not to hire another, but still to live as penuriously as possible, in order, notwithstanding his remonstrances, to save all she could of her income for her son.

Here the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Belfield, who very familiarly said she came to tell Cecilia they were *all in the wrong box* in letting her son know of the 10*l.* bank note, "for," continued she, "he has a pride that would grace a duke, and he thinks nothing of his hardships, so long as nobody knows of them. So another time we must manage things better, and when we do him any good, not let him know a word of the matter. We'll settle it all among ourselves, and one day or other he'll be glad enough to thank us."

Cecilia, who saw Miss Belfield colour with shame at the freedom of this hint, now arose to depart: but Mrs. Belfield begged her not to go so soon, and pressed her with such urgency to again sit down, that she was obliged to comply.

She then began a warm commendation of her son, lavishly praising all his good qualities, and exalting even his defects, concluding with saying, "But, ma'am, for all he's such a complete gentleman, and for all he's made so much of, he was so diffident, I could not get him to call and thank you for
the

the present you made him, though, when he went his last airing, I almost knelt to him to do it. But, with all his merit, he wants as much encouragement as a lady, for I can tell you it is not a little will do for him."

Cecilia, amazed at this extraordinary speech, looked from the mother to the daughter in order to discover its meaning, which, however, was soon rendered plainer by what followed.

"But pray now, ma'am, don't think him the more ungrateful for his shyness, for young ladies so high in the world as you are, must go pretty good lengths before a young man will get courage to speak to them. And though I have told my son over and over that the ladies never like a man the worse for being a little bold, he's so much down in the mouth that it has no effect upon him. But it all comes of his being brought up at the university, for that makes him think he knows better than I can tell him. And so, to be sure, he does. However, for all that, it is a hard thing upon a mother to find all she says goes just for nothing. But I hope you'll excuse him, ma'am, for its nothing in the world but his over modesty."

Cecilia now stared with a look of so much astonishment and displeasure, that Mrs. Belfield, suspecting she had gone rather too far, added, "I beg you won't take what I've said amiss, ma'am, for we mothers of families are

more used to speak out than maiden ladies. And I should not have said so much, but only I was afraid you would misconstrue my son's backwardness; and so that he might be flung out of your favour at last, and all for nothing but having too much respect for you."

"O dear mother!" cried Miss Belfield, whose face was the colour of scarlet, "pray!"—

"What's the matter now?" cried Mrs. Belfield; "you are as shy as your brother; and if we are all to be so, when are we to come to an understanding?"

"Not immediately, I believe, indeed," said Cecilia, rising; "but that we may not plunge deeper in our mistakes, I will for the present take my leave."

"No, ma'am," cried Mrs. Belfield, stopping her, "pray don't go yet, for I've got a great many things I want to talk to you about. In the first place, ma'am, pray what is your opinion of this scheme for sending my son abroad into foreign parts? I don't know what you may think of it, but as to me, it half drives me out of my senses to have him taken away from me at last in that unnatural manner. And I'm sure, ma'am, if you would only put in a word against it, I dare say he would give it up without a demur."

"Me?" cried Cecilia, disengaging herself from her hold, "No, madam, you must
apply

apply to those friends who better understand his affairs, and who would have a deeper interest in detaining him."

"Lack-a-day!" cried Mrs. Belfield, with scarcely smothered vexation, "how hard it is to make these grand young ladies come to reason! As to my son's other friends, what good will it do for him to mind what they say? who can expect him to give up his journey, without knowing what amends he shall get for it?"

"You must settle this matter with him at your leisure," said Cecilia, "I cannot now stay another moment."

Mrs. Belfield, again finding she had been too precipitate, tried to draw back, saying, "Pray, ma'am, don't let what I have mentioned go against my son in your good opinion, for he knows no more of it than the furthest person in the world, as my daughter can testify: for as to shyness, he's just as shy as a lady himself; so what good he ever got at the University, as to the matter of making his fortune, it's what I never could discover. However, I dare say he knows best; though when all comes to all, if I was to speak my mind, I think he's made but a poor hand of it."

Cecilia, who only through compassion to the blushing Henrietta forbore repressing this forwardness more seriously, merely answered Mrs. Belfield by wishing her good

morning : but, while she was taking a kinder leave of her timid daughter, the mother added, " As to the present, ma'am, you was so kind to make us, Henny can witness for me every penny of it shall go to my son."

" I rather meant it," said Cecilia, " for your daughter ; but if it is of use to any body, my purpose is sufficiently answered."

Mrs. Belfield again pressed her to sit down, but she would not again listen to her, coldly saying, " I am sorry you troubled Mr. Belfield with any mention of what passed between his sister and me, but should you speak of it again, I beg you will explain to him that he had no concern in that little transaction, which belonged wholly to ourselves."

She then hastened down stairs, followed, however, by Mrs. Belfield, making awkward excuses for what she had said, intermixed with frequent hints that she knew all the time she was in the right.

This little incident, which convinced Cecilia Mrs. Belfield was firmly persuaded she was in love with her son, gave her much uneasiness ; she feared the son himself might entertain the same notion, and thought it most probable the daughter also had imbibed it, though but for the forward vulgarity of the sanguine mother, their opinions might long have remained concealed. Her benevolence towards them, notwithstanding its purity, must now therefore cease to be exerted.:

erted: nor could she even visit Miss Belfield, since prudence, and a regard for her own character, seemed immediately to prohibit all commerce with the family.

“And thus difficult,” cried she, “is the blameless use of riches, though all who want them, think nothing so easy as their disposal! This family I have so much wished to serve, I may at last only have injured, since the disappointment of their higher expectations, may render all smaller benefits contemptible. And thus this unfortunate misconstruction of my good offices, robs them of a useful assistant, and deprives me at the same time of an amiable companion.”

As soon as she returned home, she had a letter put into her hand which came from Mr. Marriot, whose servant had twice called for an answer in the short time she had been absent.

This letter contained a most passionate avowal of the impression she had made on his heart the preceding evening, and an angry complaint that Mr. Harrel had refused to hear his proposals. He entreated her permission to wait upon her for only five minutes, and concluded with the most fervent professions of respect and admiration.

The precipitancy of this declaration served merely to confirm the opinion she had already conceived of the weakness of his understanding: but the obstinacy of Mr. Harrel irritated

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and distressed her; though weary of expostulating with so hopeless a subject, whom neither reason nor gratitude could turn from his own purposes, she was obliged to submit to his management, and was well content, in the present instance, to affirm his decree. She therefore wrote a concise answer to her new admirer, in the usual form of civil rejection.

C H A P. IX.

A N A C C O M M O D A T I O N.

C E C I L I A was informed the next morning that a young woman begged to speak with her, and upon sending for her up stairs, she saw, to her great surprise, Miss Belfield.

She came in fear and trembling, sent, she said, by her mother, to entreat her pardon for what had passed the preceding day: "But I know, madam," she added, "you cannot pardon it, and therefore all that I mean to do is to clear my brother from any share in what was said, for indeed he has too much sense to harbour any such presumption; and to thank you with a most grateful heart for all the goodness you have shewn us."

And.

And then, modestly courtying, she would have returned home; but Cecilia, much touched by her gentleness, took her hand, and kindly reviving her by assurances of esteem, entreated that she would lengthen her stay.

“How good is this, madam,” said she, “after having so much reason to think so ill of me and of all of us! I tried all in my power to undeceive my mother, or at least to keep her quiet; but she was so much persuaded she was right, that she never would listen to me, and always said, did I suppose it was for *me* you condescended to come so often?”

“Yes,” answered Cecilia, “most undoubtedly; had I not known you, however well I might have wished your brother, I should certainly not have visited at his house. But I am very happy to hear the mistake had spread no further.”

“No indeed, madam, I never once thought of it; and as to my brother, when my mother only hinted it to him, he was quite angry. But though I don’t mean to vindicate what has happened, you will not, I hope, be displeased if I say my mother is much more pardonable than she seems to be, for the same mistake she made with you, she would have been as apt to have made with a princess; it was not, therefore, from any want of respect, but merely from thinking

my brother might marry as high as he pleased, and believing no lady would refuse him, if he would but have the courage to speak."

Cecilia assured her she would think no more of the error, but told her that to avoid its renewal, she must decline calling upon her again till her brother was gone. She begged therefore to see her in Portman-square whenever she had leisure, repeatedly assuring her of her good opinion and regard, and of the pleasure with which she should seize every opportunity of shewing them.

Delighted by a reception so kind, Miss Belfield remained with her all the morning; and when at last she was obliged to leave her, she was but too happy in being solicited to repeat her visit.

She suffered one day only to elapse before she shewed her readiness to accept the friendship that was offered her; and Cecilia, much pleased by this eagerness, redoubled her efforts to oblige and to serve her.

From this time, hardly a day passed in which she did not call in Portman-square, where nothing in her reception was omitted that could contribute to her contentment. Cecilia was glad to employ her mind in any way that related not to Delvile, whom she now earnestly endeavoured to think of no more, denying herself even the pleasure of talking of him with Miss Belfield, by the name of her brother's noble friend.

During

During this time she devised various methods, all too delicate to give even the shadow of offence, for making both useful and ornamental presents to her new favourite, with whom she grew daily more satisfied, and to whom she purposed hereafter offering a residence in her own house.

The trial of intimacy, so difficult to the ablest to stand, and from which even the most faultless are so rarely acquitted, Miss Belfield sustained with honour. Cecilia found her artless, ingenuous, and affectionate; her understanding was good, though no pains had been taken to improve it; her disposition though ardent was soft, and her mind seemed informed by intuitive integrity.

She communicated to Cecilia all the affairs of her family, disguising from her neither distress nor meanness, and seeking to palliate nothing but the grosser parts of the character of her mother. She seemed equally ready to make known to her even the most chosen secrets of her own bosom, for that such she had was evident, from a frequent appearance of absence and uneasiness which she took but little trouble to conceal. Cecilia, however, trusted not herself, in the present critical situation of her own mind, with any enquiries that might lead to a subject she was conscious she ought not to dwell upon: a short time, she hoped, would totally remove her suspense; but as she had much less reason to
expect

expect good than evil, she made it her immediate study to prepare for the worst, and therefore carefully avoided all discourse that, by nourishing her tenderness, might weaken her resolution,

While thus, in friendly conversation and virtuous forbearance, passed gravely, but not unhappily, the time of Cecilia, the rest of the house was very differently employed: feasting, revelling, amusements of all sorts were pursued with more eagerness than ever, and the alarm which so lately threatened their destruction, seemed now merely to heighten the avidity with which they were sought. Yet never was the disunion of happiness and diversion more striking and obvious: Mr. Harrel, in spite of his natural levity, was seized from time to time with fits of horror that embittered his gayest moments, and cast a cloud upon all his enjoyments. Always an enemy to solitude, he now found it wholly insupportable, and ran into company of any sort, less from a hope of finding entertainment, than from a dread of spending half an hour by himself.

Cecilia, who saw that his rapacity for pleasure increased with his uneasiness, once more ventured to speak with his lady upon the subject of reformation; counselling her to take advantage of his present apparent discontent, which shewed at least some sensibility of his situation, in order to point out
to

to him the necessity of an immediate inspection into his affairs, which, with a total change in his way of life, was her only chance for snatching him from the dismal despondency into which he was sinking.

Mrs. Harrel declared herself unequal to following this advice, and said that her whole study was to find Mr. Harrel amusement, for he was grown so ill-humoured and petulant she quite feared being alone with him.

The house therefore now was more crowded than ever, and nothing but dissipation was thought of. Among those who upon this plan were courted to it, the foremost was Mr. Morrice, who, from a peculiar talent of uniting servility of conduct with gaiety of speech, made himself at once so agreeable and useful in the family, that in a short time they fancied it impossible to live without him. And Morrice, though his first view in obtaining admittance had been the cultivation of his acquaintance with Cecilia, was perfectly satisfied with the turn that matters had taken, since his utmost vanity had never led him to entertain any matrimonial hopes with her, and he thought his fortune as likely to profit from the civility of her friends as of herself. For Morrice, however flighty and wild, had always at heart the study of his own interest; and though from a giddy forwardness of disposition he often gave offence,

his

his meaning and his serious attention was not the less directed to the advancement of his own affairs: he formed no connection from which he hoped not some benefit, and he considered the acquaintance and friendship of his superiors in no other light than that of procuring him sooner or later recommendation to new clients.

Sir Robert Floyer was also more frequent than ever in his visits, and Mr. Harrel, notwithstanding the remonstrances of Cecilia, contrived every possible opportunity of giving him access to her. Mrs. Harrel herself, tho' hitherto neutral, now pleaded his cause with earnestness; and Mr. Arnott, who had been her former refuge from this persecution, grew so serious and so tender in his devoirs, that, unable any longer to doubt the sentiments she had inspired, she was compelled even with him to be guarded and distant.

She now with daily concern looked back to the sacrifice she had made to the worthless and ungrateful Mr. Harrel, and was sometimes tempted to immediately chuse another guardian, and leave his house for ever: yet the delicacy of her disposition was averse to any step that might publicly expose him, and her early regard for his wife would not suffer her to put it in execution.

These circumstances contributed strongly to encrease her intimacy with Miss Belfield; she now never saw Mrs. Delvile, whom alone she

She preferred to her, and from the troublesome assiduity of Sir Robert, scarce ever met Mr. Monckton but in his presence: she found, therefore, no resource against teasing and vexation, but what was afforded her by the conversation of the amiable Henrietta.

C H A P. X.

A D E T E C T I O N.

A Fortnight had now elapsed in which Cecilia had had no sort of communication with the Delvilles, whom equally from pride and from prudence she forbore to seek herself, when one morning, while Miss Belfield was sitting with her, she was told by her maid that young Mr. Delvile was in the drawing-room, and begged the honour of seeing her for a few moments.

Cecilia, though she started and changed colour with surprize at this message, was unconscious she did either, from the yet greater surprize she received by the behaviour of Miss Belfield, who hastily arising, exclaimed
 “ Good God, Mr. Delvile! — do you
 know

know Mr. Delvile, madam?—does Mr. Delvile visit at this house?”

“ Sometimes; not often,” answered Cecilia; “ but why?”

“ I don't know, — nothing, madam, — I only asked by accident, I believe—but it's very—it's extremely—I did not know——” and colouring violently, she again sat down.

An apprehension the most painful now took possession of Cecilia, and absorbed in thought, she continued for some minutes silent and immovable.

From this state she was awakened by her maid, who asked if she chose to have her gloves.

Cecilia, taking them from her without speaking, left the room, and not daring to stop for enquiry or consideration, hastened down stairs; but when she entered the apartment where young Delvile was waiting for her, all utterance seemed denied her, and she courtesied without saying a word.

Struck with the look and uncommon manner of her entrance, he became in a moment as much disturbed as herself, pouring forth a thousand unnecessary and embarrassed apologies for his visit, and so totally forgetting even the reason why he made it, that he had taken his leave, and was departing before he recollected it. He then turned back, forcing a laugh at his own absence of mind, and told her

her he had only called to acquaint her, that the commands with which she had honoured him were now obeyed, and, he hoped, to her satisfaction.

Cecilia, who knew not she had ever given him any, waited his further explanation; and he then informed her he had that very morning introduced Mr. Belfield to the Earl of Vannelt, who had already heard him very advantageously spoken of by some gentlemen to whom he had been known at the University, and who was so much pleased with him upon this first interview, that he meant, after a few enquiries, which could not but turn out to his credit, to commit his eldest son to his trust in making the tour of Europe.

Cecilia thanked him for her share in the trouble he had taken in this transaction; and then asked if Mrs. Delville continued well.

“Yes,” answered he with a smile half reproachful, “as well as one who having ever hoped your favour, can easily be after finding that hope disappointed. But much as she has taught her son, there is one lesson she might perhaps learn from him;—to fly, not seek, those dangerous indulgencies of which the deprivation is the loss of peace!”

He then bowed, and made his exit.

This unexpected reproof, and the yet more unexpected compliment that accompanied it, in both which *more seemed meant than met the*
ear,

ear, encreased the perturbation into which Cecilia had already been thrown. It occurred to her that under the sanction of his mother's name, he had taken an opportunity of making an apology for his own conduct; yet why avoiding her society, if to that he alluded, should be *flying a dangerous indulgence*, she could not understand, since he had so little reason to fear any repulse in continuing to seek it.

Sorry, however, for the abrupt manner in which she had left Miss Belfield, she lost not a moment in hastening back to her; but when she came into the room, she found her employed in looking out of the window, her eye following some object with such earnestness of attention, that she perceived not her return.

Cecilia, who could not doubt the motive of her curiosity, had no great difficulty in forbearing to offer her any interruption. She drew her head back in a few minutes, and casting it upwards, with her hands clasped, softly whispered, "Heaven ever shield and bless him! and O may he never feel such pain as I do!"

She then again looked out, but soon drawing herself in, said, in the same soft accents, "Oh why art thou gone! sweetest and noblest of men! why might I not see thee longer, when, under heaven, there is no other blessing I wish for!"

A sigh which at these words escaped Cecilia made her start and turn towards the door; the deepest blushes overspread the cheeks of both as their eyes met each other, and while Miss Belfield trembled in every limb at the discovery she had made, Cecilia herself was hardly able to stand.

A painful and most embarrassed silence succeeded, which was only broken by Miss Belfield's bursting into tears.

Cecilia, extremely moved, forgot for a moment her own interest in what was passing, and tenderly approaching, embraced her with the utmost kindness: but still she spoke not, fearing to make any enquiry, from dreading to hear any explanation.

Miss Belfield, soothed by her softness, clung about her, and hiding her face in her arms, sobbed out "Ah madam! who ought to be unhappy if befriended by you! if I could help it, I would love nobody else in almost the whole world. But you must let me leave you now, and to-morrow I will tell you every thing."

Cecilia, who had no wish for making any opposition, embraced her again, and suffered her quietly to depart.

Her own mind was now in a state of the utmost confusion. The rectitude of her heart and the soundness of her judgment had hitherto guarded her both from error and blame, and, except during her recent sus-

ear, increased the perturbation into which Cecilia had already been thrown. It occurred to her that under the sanction of his mother's name, he had taken an opportunity of making an apology for his own conduct; yet why avoiding her society, if to that he alluded, should be *flying a dangerous indulgence*, she could not understand, since he had so little reason to fear any repulse in continuing to seek it.

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Cecilia, who had no wish for making any opposition, embraced her again, and suffered her quietly to depart.

Her own mind was now in a state of the utmost confusion. The rectitude of her heart and the soundness of her judgment had hitherto guarded her both from error and blame, and, except during her recent sus-

pense, had preserved her tranquillity inviolate: but her commerce with the world had been small and confined, and her actions had had little reference but to herself. The case was now altered; and she was suddenly in a conjuncture of all others the most delicate, that of accidentally discovering a rival in a favourite friend.

The fondness she had conceived for Miss Belfield, and the sincerity of her intentions as well as promises to serve her, made the detection of this secret peculiarly cruel: she had lately felt no pleasure but in her society, and looked forward to much future comfort from the continuance of her regard, and from their constantly living together: but now this was no longer even to be desired, since the utter annihilation of the wishes of both, by young Delvile's being disposed of to a third person, could alone render eligible their dwelling under the same roof.

Her pity, however, for Miss Belfield, was almost wholly unallayed by jealousy; she harboured not any suspicion that she was loved by young Delvile, whose aspiring spirit led her infinitely more to fear some higher rival, than to believe he bestowed even a thought upon the poor Henrietta: but still she wished with the utmost ardour to know the length of their acquaintance, how often they had met, when they had conversed, what
notice

notice he had taken of her, and how so dangerous a preference had invaded her heart.

But though this curiosity was both natural and powerful, her principal concern was the arrangement of her own conduct: the next day Miss Belfield was to tell her every thing by a voluntary promise; but she doubted if she had any right to accept such a confidence. Miss Belfield, she was sure, knew not she was interested in the tale, since she had not even imagined that Delvile was known to her. She might hope, therefore, not only for advice but assistance, and fancy that while she reposed her secret in the bosom of a friend, she secured herself her best offices and best wishes for ever.

Would she obtain them? no; the most romantic generosity would revolt from such a demand, for however precarious was her own chance with young Delvile, Miss Belfield she was sure could not have any: neither her birth nor education fitted her for his rank in life, and even were both unexceptionable, the smallness of her fortune, as Mr. Monckton had instructed her, would be an obstacle insurmountable.

Would it not be a kind of treachery to gather from her every thing, yet aid her in nothing? to take advantage of her unsuspecting openness, in order to learn all that related to one whom she yet hoped would belong ultimately to herself, and gratify an in-

terested-curiosity at the expence of a candour not more simple than amiable? "No," cried Cecilia, "arts that I could never forgive, I never will practice; this sweet but unhappy girl shall tell me nothing: betrayed already by the tenderness of her own heart, she shall at least suffer no further from any duplicity in mine. If, indeed, Mr. Delvile, as I suspect, is engaged elsewhere, I will make this gentle Henrietta the object of my future solicitude; the sympathy of our situations will not then divide but unite us, and I will take her to my bosom, hear all her sorrows, and calm her troubled spirit by participating in her sensibility. But if, on the contrary, this mystery ends more happily for myself, if Mr. Delvile has now no other engagement, and hereafter clears his conduct to my satisfaction, I will not be accessary to loading her future recollection with the shame of a confidence she then cannot but repent, nor with an injury to her delicacy that may wound it for ever."

"She determined, therefore, carefully to avoid the subject for the present, since she could offer no advice for which she might not, hereafter, be suspected of selfish motives; but yet, from a real regard to the tender-hearted girl, to give all the tacit discouragement that was in her power, to a passion which she firmly believed would be productive of nothing but misery.

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Once, from the frankness natural to her disposition, she thought not merely of receiving but returning her confidence: her better judgment, however, soon led her from so hazardous a plan, which could only have exposed them both to a romantic humiliation, by which, in the end, their mutual expectations might prove sources of mutual distrust.

When Miss Belfield, therefore, the next morning, her air unusually timid, and her whole face covered with blushes, made her visit, Cecilia, not seeming to notice her confusion, told her she was very sorry she was obliged to go out herself, and contrived, under various pretences, to keep her maid in the room. Miss Belfield, supposing this to be accidental, rejoiced in her imaginary reprieve, and soon recovered her usual cheerfulness: and Cecilia, who really meant to call upon Mrs. Delvile, borrowed Mrs. Harrel's carriage, and set down her artless young friend at her new lodgings in Portland-Street, before she proceeded to St. James's-Square, talking the whole time upon matters of utter indifference.

C H A P. XI.

A S A R C A S M.

THE reproach which Cecilia had received from young Delvile in the name of his mother, determined her upon making this visit; for though, in her present uncertainty, she wished only to see that family when sought by themselves, she was yet desirous to avoid all appearance of singularity, lest any suspicions should be raised of her sentiments.

Mrs. Delvile received her with a cold civility that chilled and afflicted her: she found her seriously offended by her long absence, and now for the first time perceived that haughtiness of character which hitherto she had thought only given to her by the calumny of envy; for though her displeasure was undisguised, she deigned not to make any reproaches, evidently shewing that her disappointment in the loss of her society, was embittered by a proud regret for the kindness she believed she had thrown away. But though she scrupulously forbore the smallest complaint, she failed not from time to time
to

to cast out reflections upon fickleness and caprice the most satirical and pointed.

Cecilia, who could not possibly avow the motives of her behaviour, ventured not to offer any apology for her apparent negligence; but, hitherto accustomed to the most distinguished kindness, a change to so much bitterness, shocked and overpowered her, and she sat almost wholly silent, and hardly able to look up.

Lady Honoria Pemberton, a daughter of the Duke of Derwent, now came into the room, and afforded her some relief by the sprightliness of her conversation. This young lady, who was a relation of the Delvilles, and of a character the most airy and unthinking, ran on during her whole visit in a vein of fashionable scandal, with a levity that the censures of Mrs. Delville, though by no means ipared, had no power to control: and after having compleatly ransacked the topics of the day, she turned suddenly to Cecilia, with whom during her residence in St. James's-Square she had made some acquaintance, and said, "So I hear, Miss Beverley, that after half the town has given you to Sir Robert Floyer, and the other half to my Lord Derford, you intend, without regarding one side or the other, to disappoint them both, and give yourself to Mr. Marriot."

"Me? no, indeed," answered Cecilia,

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"you

“ your ladyship has been much misinformed.”

“ I hope so,” said Mrs. Delvile, “ for Mr. Marriot, by all I ever heard of him, seems to have but one recommendation, and that the last Miss Beverley ought to value, a good estate.”

Cecilia, secretly delighted by a speech which she could not resist flattering herself had reference to her son, now a little revived, and endeavoured to bear some part in the conversation.

“ Every body one meets,” cried Lady Honoria, “ disposes of Miss Beverley to some new person; yet the common opinion is that Sir Robert Floyer will be the man. But upon my word, for my own part, I cannot conjecture how she will manage among them, for Mr. Marriot declares he’s determined he won’t be refused, and Sir Robert vows that he’ll never give her up. So we none of us know how it will end: but I am vastly glad she keeps them so long in suspense.”

“ If there is any suspense,” said Cecilia, “ I am at least sure it must be wilful. But why should your ladyship rejoice in it?”

“ O, because it helps to torment them, and keeps something going forward. Besides, we are all looking in the newspapers every day, to see when they’ll fight another duel for you.”

“ Ano-

"Another?" cried Cecilia; "indeed they have never yet fought any for me."

"O, I beg your pardon," answered her ladyship, "Sir Robert, you know, fought one for you in the beginning of the winter, with that Irish fortune-hunter who affronted you at the Opera."

"Irish fortune-hunter?" repeated Cecilia, "how strangely has that quarrel been misrepresented! In the first place, I never was affronted at the Opera at all, and in the second, if your Ladyship means Mr. Belfield, I question if ever he was in Ireland in his life."

"Well," cried Lady Honoria, "he might come from Scotland, for ought I know, but somewhere he certainly came from; and they tell me he is wounded terribly, and Sir Robert has had all his things packed up this month, that in case he should die, he may go abroad in a moment."

"And pray where, Lady Honoria," cried Mrs. Delvile, "do you contrive to pick up all this rattle?"

"O, I don't know; every body tells me something, so I put it all together as well as I can. But I could acquaint you with a stranger piece of news than any you have heard yet."

"And what is that?"

"O, if I let you know it, you'll tell your son."

“No, indeed,” said Mrs. Delvile laughing, “I shall probably forget it myself.”

She then made some farther difficulty, and Cecilia, uncertain if she was meant to be a party in the communication, strolled to a window; where, however, as Lady Honoria did not lower her voice, she heard her say “Why you must know I am told he keeps a mistress somewhere in Oxford-Road. They say she’s mighty pretty; I should like vastly to see her.”

The consternation of Cecilia at this intelligence would certainly have betrayed all she so much wished to conceal, had not her fortunate removal to the window guarded her from observation. She kept her post, fearing to look round, but was much pleased when Mrs. Delvile, with great indignation answered “I am sorry, Lady Honoria, you can find any amusement in listening to such idle scandal, which those who tell will never respect you for hearing. In times less daring in slander, the character of Mortimer would have proved to him a shield from all injurious aspersions; yet who shall wonder he could not escape, and who shall contemn the inventors of calumny, if Lady Honoria Pemberton condescends to be entertained with it?”

“Dear Mrs. Delvile,” cried Lady Honoria, giddily, “you take me too seriously.”

“And

“And dear Lady Honoria,” said Mrs. Delvile, “I would it were possible to make you take yourself seriously; for could you once see with clearness and precision how much you lower your own dignity, while you stoop to depreciate that of others, the very subjects that now make your diversion, would then, far more properly, move your resentment.”

“Ay but, dear madam,” cried Lady Honoria, “if that were the case, I should be quite perfect, and then you and I should never quarrel, and I don’t know what we should do for conversation.”

And with these words, hastily shaking hands with her, she took leave.

“Such conversation,” said Mrs. Delvile when she was gone, “as results from the mixture of fruitless admonition with incorrigible levity, would be indeed *more honoured in the breach than the observance*. But levity is so much the fashionable characteristic of the present age, that a gay young girl who, like Lady Honoria Pemberton, rules the friends by whom she ought to be ruled, had little chance of escaping it.”

“She seems so open, however, to reproof,” said Cecilia, “that I should hope in a short time she may also be open to conviction.”

“No,” answered Mrs. Delvile, “I have no hope of her at all. I once took much

pains with her; but I soon found that the easiness with which she hears of her faults, is only another effect of the levity with which she commits them. But if the young are never tired of erring in conduct, neither are the older in erring in judgment; the fallibility of *mine* I have indeed very lately experienced."

Cecilia, who strongly felt the poignancy of this sarcasm, and whose constant and unaffected value of Mrs. Delvile by no means deserved it, was again silenced, and again most cruelly depressed: nor could she secretly forbear repining that at the very moment she found herself threatened with a necessity of foregoing the society of her new favourite, Miss Belfield, the woman in the whole world whom she most wished to have for her friend, from an unhappy mistake was ready to relinquish her. Grieved to be thus fallen in her esteem, and shocked that she could offer no justification, after a short and thoughtful pause, she gravely arose to take leave.

Mrs. Delvile then told her that if she had any business to transact with Mr. Delvile, she advised her to acquaint him with it soon, as the whole family left town in a few days.

This was a new and severe blow to Cecilia, who sorrowfully repeated "In a few days, madam?"

"Yes,"

“Yes,” answered Mrs. Delvile; “I hope you intend to be much concerned?”

“Ah madam!” cried Cecilia, who could no longer preserve her quietness, “if you knew but half the respect I bear you, but half the sincerity with which I value and revere you, all protestations would be useless, for all accusations would be over!”

Mrs. Delvile, at once surprised and softened by the warmth of this declaration, instantly took her hand, and said “They shall now, and for ever be over, if it pains you to hear them. I concluded that what I said would be a matter of indifference to you, or all my displeasure would immediately have been satisfied, when once I had intimated that your absence had excited it.”

“That I have excited it at all,” answered Cecilia, “gives me indeed the severest uneasiness; but believe me, madam, however unfortunately appearances may be against me, I have always had the highest sense of the kindness with which you have honoured me, and never has there been the smallest abatement in the veneration, gratitude and affection I have inviolably borne you.”

“You see, then,” said Mrs. Delvile with a smile, “that where reproof takes any effect, it is not received with that easiness you were just now admiring: on the contrary, where a concession is made without pain, it is also made without meaning, for it is not

in human nature to project any amendment without a secret repugnance. That here, however, you should differ from Lady Honoria Pemberton, who can wonder, when you are superior to all comparison with her in every thing?"

"Will you then," said Cecilia, "accept my apology, and forgive me?"

"I will do more," said Mrs. Delvile laughing, "I will forgive you *without* an apology; for the truth is I have heard none! But come," continued she, perceiving Cecilia much abashed by this comment, "I will enquire no more about the matter; I am glad to receive my young friend again, and even half ashamed, deserving as she is, to say *how* glad!"

She then embraced her affectionately, and owned she had been more mortified by her fancied desertion than she had been willing to own even to herself, repeatedly assuring her that for many years she had not made any acquaintance she so much wished to cultivate, nor enjoyed any society from which she had derived so much pleasure.

Cecilia, whose eyes glistened with modest joy, while her heart beat quick with revived expectation, in listening to an effusion of praise so infinitely grateful to her, found little difficulty in returning her friendly professions, and, in a few minutes, was not merely

merely reconciled, but more firmly united with her than ever.

Mrs. Delvile insisted upon keeping her to dinner, and Cecilia, but too happy in her earnestness, readily agreed to send Mrs. Harrel an excuse.

Neither of the Mr. Delviles spent the day at home, and nothing, therefore, disturbed or interrupted those glowing and delightful sensations which spring from a cordial renewal of friendship and kindness. The report, indeed, of Lady Honoria Pemberton gave her some uneasiness; yet the flighty character of that lady, and Mrs. Delvile's reply to it, soon made her drive it from her mind.

She returned home early in the evening, as other company was expected, and she had not changed her dress since the morning; but she first made a promise to see Mrs. Delvile some part of every day during the short time that she meant to remain in town.

C H A P. XII.

A SURMISE.

THE next morning opened with another scene; Mrs. Harrel ran into Cecilia's room before breakfast, and acquainted her that Mr. Harrel had not been at home all night.

The consternation with which she heard this account she instantly endeavoured to dissipate, in order to soften the apprehension with which it was communicated: Mrs. Harrel, however, was extremely uneasy, and sent all the town over to make enquiries, but without receiving any intelligence.

Cecilia, unwilling to leave her in a state of such alarm, wrote an excuse to Mrs. Delvile, that she might continue with her till some information was procured. A subject also of such immediate concern, was sufficient apology for avoiding any particular conversation with Miss Belfield, who called as usual, about noon, and whose susceptible heart was much affected by the evident disturbance in which she found Cecilia.

The

The whole day passed, and no news arrived : but, greatly to her astonishment, Mrs. Harrel in the evening prepared for going to an assembly ! yet declaring at the same time it was extremely disagreeable to her, only she was afraid, if she stayed away, every body would suppose something was the matter.

“ Who then at last, thought Cecilia, are half so much the slaves of the world as the gay and the dissipated ? Those who work for hire, have at least their hours of rest ; those who labour for subsistence, are at liberty when subsistence is procured ; but those who toil to please the vain and the idle, undertake a task which can never be finished, however scrupulously all private peace, and all internal comfort, may be sacrificed in reality to the folly of saving appearances ! ”

Losing, however, the motive for which she had given up her own engagement, she now sent for her chair, in order to spend an hour or two with Mrs. Delvile.

The servants, as they conducted her up stairs, said they would call their lady ; and in entering the drawing room she saw, reading and alone, young Delvile.

He seemed much surprised, but received her with the utmost respect, apologizing for the absence of his mother, whom he said had understood she was not to see her till the next day, and had left him to write letters now, that she might then be at liberty.

Cecilia

Cecilia in return made excuses for her seeming inconsistency; after which, for some time, all conversation dropt.

The silence was at length broken by young Delvile's saying, "Mr. Belfield's merit has not been thown away upon Lord Vannelt; he has heard an excellent character of him from all his former acquaintance, and is now fitting up an apartment for him in his own house till his son begins his tour."

Cecilia said she was very happy in hearing such intelligence; and then again they were both silent.

"You have seen," said young Delvile, after this second pause, "Mr. Belfield's sister?"

Cecilia, not without changing colour, answered, "Yes, Sir."

"She is very amiable," he continued, "too amiable, indeed, for her situation, since her relations, her brother alone excepted, are all utterly unworthy of her."

He stopt; but Cecilia made no answer, and he presently added, "Perhaps y u do not think her amiable?—you may have seen more of her, and know something to her disadvantage?"

"O no!" cried Cecilia, with a forced alacrity, "but only I was thinking that—did you say you knew all her relations?"

"No," he answered, "but when I have been with Mr. Belfield, some of them have called upon him."

Again

Again they were both silent; and then Cecilia, ashamed of her apparent backwardness to give praise, compelled herself to say, "Miss Belfield is indeed a very sweet girl, and I wish —" she stopt, not well knowing herself what she meant to add.

"I have been greatly pleased," said he, after waiting some time to hear if she would finish her speech, "by being informed of your goodness to her, and I think she seems equally to require and to deserve it. I doubt not you will extend it to her when she is deprived of her brother, for then will be the time that by doing her most service, it will reflect on yourself most honour."

Cecilia, confounded by this recommendation, faintly answered, "Certainly, — whatever is in my power; — I shall be very glad —"

And just then Mrs. Delvile made her appearance, and during the mutual apologies that followed, her son left the room. Cecilia, glad of any pretence to leave it also, insisted upon giving no interruption to Mrs. Delvile's letter writing, and having promised to spend all the next day with her, hurried back to her chair.

The reflections that followed her thither were by no means the most soothing; she began now to apprehend that the pity she had bestowed upon Miss Belfield, Miss Belfield in a short time might bestow upon her :

at any other time, his recommendation would merely have served to confirm her opinion of his benevolence, but in her present state of anxiety and uncertainty, every thing gave birth to conjecture, and had power to alarm her. He had behaved to her of late with the strangest coldness and distance,——his praise of Henrietta had been ready and animated.—Henrietta she knew adored him, and she knew not with what reason,—but an involuntary suspicion arose in her mind, that the partiality she had herself once excited, was now transferred to that little-dreaded, but not less dangerous rival.

Yet, if such was the case, what was to become either of the pride or the interest of his family? Would his relations ever pardon an alliance stimulated neither by rank nor riches? would Mr. Delvile, who hardly ever spoke but to the high-born, without seeming to think his dignity somewhat injured, deign to receive for a daughter-in-law the child of a citizen and tradesman? would Mrs. Delvile herself, little less elevated in her notions, though infinitely softer in her manners, ever condescend to acknowledge her? Cecilia's own birth and connections, superior as they were to those of Miss Bel-field, were even openly disdained by Mr. Delvile, and all her expectations of being received into his family were founded upon the largeness of her fortune, in favour of
which.

which the brevity of her genealogy might perhaps pass unnoticed. But what was the chance of Miss Belfield, who neither had ancestors to boast, nor wealth to allure?

This thought, however, awakened all the generosity of her soul: "If," cried she, "the advantages I possess are merely those of riches, how little should I be flattered by ~~any~~ appearance of preference! and how ill can I judge with what sincerity it may be offered! happier in that case is the lowly Henrietta, who, to poverty may attribute neglect, but who can only be sought and caressed from motives of purest regard. She loves Mr. Delvile, loves him with the most artless affection:—perhaps, too, he loves her in return,—why else his solicitude to know my opinion of her, and why so sudden his alarm when he thought it unfavourable? Perhaps he means to marry her, and to sacrifice to her innocence and her attractions all plans of ambition, and all views of aggrandizement:—thrice happy Henrietta, if such is thy prospect of felicity! to have inspired a passion so disinterested, may humble the most insolent of thy superiors, and teach even the wealthiest to envy thee!"

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